



## Janet Petrisin guides MSD Wayne transportation along new road



The transportation department for the Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township is now under the direction of Janet Petrisin, former assistant principal at North Wayne Elementary. Petrisin replaces former Transportation Director Lynda Kuchler, who retired over the summer.

“I thought really hard about it to make sure it was a good fit for me,” said Petrisin, who spent 22 years in teaching and administrative roles. “I like to manage; I like to lead. I like to create new things that will be better and more efficient.”

Petrisin has already had the opportunity to shepherd the district through two transportation changes this school year: a new routing system and the move from picking each student up in front of their home to common bus stops.

“The move to common bus stops has been the greatest challenge for our community,” Petrisin says. She and her staff worked overtime during the first two weeks of school helping parents and students locate their new bus stops and making changes when necessary to ensure student safety.

Besides working to meet the needs of students and their families, Petrisin has worked to get to know her staff. “I started out meeting with all the bus drivers,” she says.

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Petrisin says getting to know her staff has helped her understand in a new way just how challenging a school bus driver's job can be. She says she now has a deeper understanding of how difficult it can be to drive a bus safely and, at the same time, deal with student behavioral issues that can come up.

"The school bus is an extension of the classroom," says Petrisin. "You might not be teaching academics, but you're still dealing with social behaviors as you would on a playground or in a lunchroom. We don't give drivers enough credit for what they do every day. They're not only managing all the behaviors but they're driving and trying to keep safety first."

To help drivers learn to manage those student behaviors, Petrisin has put together what she calls a behavioral mentoring program.

"Four lead drivers who are successful at student management will have office hours during the school year. If a driver comes back from a route frustrated, they will have someone to go to for ideas on how to handle situations better."

Besides making these driver-mentors available to the other drivers who need them, Petrisin plans to schedule professional development for her staff once a month.

Petrisin hopes her background as a teacher and school administrator will be helpful to the department that is responsible for getting nearly 10,000 students to and from MSD Wayne schools each day.

"We have a new motto in the department," she says. "It's this: 'Education Begins with Transportation.'"

For bus stop information, click on the yellow school bus on the home page of our district website, [www.wayne.k12.in.us](http://www.wayne.k12.in.us).

*Media Contact: Mary Lang*

*mary.lang@wayne.k12.in.us*

*317-988-8654*