

# School bus driver charged with DWI

## Will Cleveland

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

A Gates Chili school bus driver was arrested Friday morning after school officials said the driver was drunk while driving students around.

Lashonda Griffin, 29, of Gates is charged with six counts of endangering the welfare of a child, driving while intoxicated, and multiple counts in violation of Leandra’s Law for driving under the influence of alcohol with children under the age of 16 in the vehicle, Gates Police Chief Jim VanBrederode said.

She made her first run Friday morning and then returned to the district bus garage parking lot, VanBrederode said. She allegedly passed out while in the bus and missed her second run, he added. That led parents to call the district and ask where the bus was. She was then located in the parking lot still asleep in her bus.

According to a district statement, school officials called the Gates Police Department after reports of unusual activity and an unauthorized stop. That unauthorized stop was a visit to Mc-Donald’s, VanBrederode said.

Griffin allegedly made a stop at the fast-food restaurant and escorted two children into the business. She went there to pick up food and coffee, Van-Brederode said. She then allegedly continued her run and picked up four more students.

The district said police confirmed that the driver had a blood-alcohol content above the legal limit.

There were six students on the bus at the time.

The district says the families of the students who were on the bus have already been notified.

“While the district cannot comment directly on personnel matters, we can say that this is an egregious violation of our policies and practices

The state’s oversight of school transportation and bus drivers was recently called into question as part of an audit by the state Comptroller’s Office. The audit specifically talks about drug and alcohol testing.

“Parents rightly assume the men and women transporting their children to and from school are qualified and have received the required training and drug and alcohol testing,” said Jennifer Freeman, director of communications for the Comptroller’s Office. “A recent audit from the State Comptroller’s office found that much needs to be done to assure that school districts are actively monitoring employees for the influence of drugs and alcohol. The safety of our kids is at stake.”



**A Gates Chili school bus driver was arrested on Friday morning.**  
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and will never be tolerated,” said Iva Petrosino, the district’s director of public relations.

Petrosino said the driver was a probationary employee with minimal due process rights and the district will be pursuing “swift and appropriate action to ensure the safety of all students.”

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