

## EXPERTISE BOOSTS TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY

### St. James Parish Schools - Litcher, La.

#### Overview

First Student's relationship with St. James Parish School Board first began with a need – consistent and dependable maintenance of their fleet of 46 buses to transport their children to and from school without any continuity gaps in service and quality. Over the past 11 years, the provision of this service has grown into a trusted relationship that includes full turnkey management of school district's transportation system.

First Student's maintenance quality, efficiencies and economies of scale provided both considerable savings and freedom from worries about the safety of their bus fleet. These initial successes with service excellence created an opportunity for expanding the relationship between First Student and St. James Parish Schools.

#### Challenge

When the St. James Parish School Board noticed that the management of its transportation department was diverting the focus of its educators, they knew that something had to be done. Though it already contracted its maintenance services with First Student, the school board needed to find a way to leverage the efficiencies First Student offered while smoothly transitioning drivers and maintaining consistent service levels.

First Student's location manager and local dispatcher took control of managing the drivers and routing, instilling standard practices while being accountable to the school board. These standards not only include driver training and considerable employee benefits but also student behavior management and routing regulations.

According to St. James Parish Schools Superintendent Dr. Alonzo "Lonnie" Luce, "We were very pleased with the maintenance and the leasing of the buses and that's what drove us. We no longer had headaches [concerning maintenance] but we were having headaches with the driving and routing. By working with First Student, we basically offloaded those headaches."

*"Outsourcing transportation allows us to focus on instructional programs for our children." - Dr. Alonzo Luce*



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Taking pressure off of our educators by transporting students in a safe and timely fashion while providing best-in-class management methodologies is First Student's primary concern. Our management procedures are designed to promote standard practices that deliver efficiencies, safety and security while delivering savings and peace of mind.

Because St. James Parish Schools previously managed its drivers, First Student had to extend a flexible contract that would shift school board drivers to First Student employment while concurrently managing all drivers. Our goal is always to employ as many of the school district's transportation employees as possible.

*Gwen, a First Student bus driver, explained, "Everybody works as a team. And when you go to your supervisor, they listen to you to see what you have to say."*

"Outsourcing transportation allows us to focus on instructional programs for our children," said Dr. Luce, adding that "the people First Student provides to us handle our [transportation] needs."

### *Delivering the Solution*

We brought on board a location manager to oversee the management of both the drivers and the maintenance shop, as well as a dispatcher and substitute drivers to ensure that routes would always be fully staffed. First Student's operations experience provides a sound management structure that can be re-arranged to suit the needs of any district.

We equip our drivers with the tools necessary to expertly navigate their routes. They also understand that they play an integral part in the life of the student. As members of the local community, our drivers are familiar faces and trusted neighbors — acting as extensions of the learning environment while the student is transported from home to school.

And the journey is not over. First Student's management of the St. James Parish Schools transportation program is still in its infancy. Dr. Luce expects that services will continue to be optimized, as drivers acclimate to First Student's policies and procedures, while looking forward to the full realization of benefits that a long-term contract with First Student brings.

### *Community Return*

In addition to freeing up time for educators to focus on their number one priority — teaching students — outsourcing can allow that extra capital saved to be reinvested in the classroom. According to Dr. Luce, First Student saves the district about \$10,000 a year per bus driver.

