



Leveraging a Trusted Partnership to Navigate Unprecedented Times

Since the mid-1990s, Syracuse City School District (SCSD) in New York has partnered with First Student to transport more than 15,000 students to and from school daily.

During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, this partnership continued in unprecedented ways. Instead of transporting students, however, First Student and SCSD embarked on a new mission.

As the Director of Transportation for Syracuse City School District, Jeremy Smith recognizes the importance of a solid partnership with a transportation service provider. At the heart of our decades-long collaboration are the individuals who work together each day to ensure a successful ride. When Jeremy needs to partner with First Student to overcome a challenge, he calls on Location Managers Lynea Telford and Laura Dowling.

“I can reach out to them and call them at any time with any issue, and they’ll take care of it.” Jeremy Smith, Director of Transportation, SCSD

The world of student transportation is fast-paced and unpredictable. Each student’s individual background and circumstances come into play daily, and First Student works to adapt our approach to fit their needs. During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, school districts across the world faced an unprecedented uncertainty. Like many others, SCSD had to find a way to implement remote learning across its large footprint. Within two weeks, about 5,000 schoolwork packets needed to be delivered to students who were unable to pick them up. Jeremy Smith knew he could count on First Student Location Manager Lynea Telford to make it happen. Lynea understood the importance of this project and what it meant to our students and their families. “I just wanted to make sure that they had all the tools that they needed to be successful during this time, and to give them some sort of sense of normalcy,” Telford recalled.

Jeremy called Lynea to collaborate on an action plan. Together they decided that the First Student team would meet at the Syracuse transportation office to organize the packets based on the students’ address. They spent hours sorting the packets. Lynea relied on her drivers’ intricate knowledge of the city to determine the most efficient delivery routes. “My drivers are really good. They know all sides of town; the streets, the addresses. They helped tremendously.” First Student drivers successfully dropped off the packets at each student’s doorstep, ensuring the Syracuse City School District could continue supporting our students.

