



Developing Transportation Partnerships in Zachary, LA

In 2002, Zachary Community School District (ZCSD) became the first school district independent of a parish in eighty years. Part of this decision included contracting their transportation services to First Student.

The resulting relationship between First Student and ZCSD allows their educators to focus on fostering growth in the state's top performing school district.

ZCSD's successes began with the principles laid out in their mission statement. ZCSD seeks to "assist every student in reaching his or her maximum potential through high-quality instruction and good stewardship of community resources." After thorough research, ZCSD found that only First Student aligned with their vision and could deliver the coverage, savings and the management capabilities it sought – now and well into the future.

By leveraging First Student best practices, corporate purchasing power and significant economies of scale, ZCSD achieved the goals set forth in their mission statement. We provide reduced prices on parts and vehicles as well as the latest cutting edge technology implemented to keep children safe.

Warren Drake, the superintendent of ZCSD and our location manager maintain a close working relationship to achieve a successful partnership. Mr. Drake says, "I consider FS a very important part of the team. I meet with the drivers and I meet with First Student during their safety meetings because they're the first people to see our students in the morning. It is also a friendship; I pick up the phone and talk to our location manager."

ZCSD tasked First Student with delivering efficient and cost effective transportation solutions where before there had been none. Implementing new service involves a transition process that touches on many levels. To help manage the transition process, we developed a comprehensive startup manual that we use as a guide and reference.

First Student now operates and maintains 62 buses for ZCSD — these services include driver management, routing services, maintenance services as well as the coverage of any additional routes on an as needed basis.

Mr. Drake says that everyone at ZCSD is a "teacher and leader in our district" and makes customer service their priority. First Student's hiring policies ensure that their drivers match the characteristics sought by ZCSD. We hire local, qualified drivers who are not only integral members in the community but are also friends and mentors to the students.

