

CINCINNATI — In 1913, Newman City Schools contracted with Patchett Bus and Transportation Company, providing student transportation services in California's first school bus. Over the next 100 years, bus company ownership changed to First Student, and the school bus design, safety features and driver training changed, but the commitment to safe, secure and reliable student transportation has remained steadfast.

As the American School Bus Council's (ASBC) Love the Bus Month kicks off in February, First Student recognizes and honors its school bus drivers across the United States for their dedication to safely and securely transporting students to and from school each day for 100 years, and also salutes the school bus as the safest form of transportation on the road today.

"Our drivers recognize the tremendous responsibility they undertake in transporting children to school throughout the year," said Linda Burtwistle, president of First Student. "Together, they drive more than 630 million safe miles each year, which is a remarkable number. We are proud of the work they do and appreciate our team's commitment to excellence. We truly love everything about the school bus."

School buses remain one of the safest forms of transportation on the road today. In fact, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, school buses are approximately 13 times safer than passenger cars and nearly 10 times safer than walking or biking to school.

Driver Commitment Is Paramount

First Student drivers receive more than 40 hours of comprehensive training before ever driving a bus for the company. This includes behind-the-wheel, classroom and safety orientation training on six foundational driving skills and key topics like bus safety, bullying prevention and student behavioral management. Their commitment extends well beyond pre-hire training, as all drivers participate in regular in-service meetings throughout the year to discuss a variety of timely safety topics.

School Bus Safety Design Evolves

Since drivers began transporting California students in open-air, wooden buses at the beginning of the 20th century, school bus safety has come a long way. The advent of metal-bodied buses and flashing lights in the 1930s and 1940s, coupled with stop arms in the 1950s and taller seats with more padding in the 1970s, brought the school bus into the modern design we see on the roads today.

The 1980s brought reflective striping, followed by crossing arms in the 1990s and on-board GPS in the early 2000s. Today, First Student school buses often include onboard cameras and Child Check-Mate technology, which is an electronic reminder designed to help prevent students from being left unattended on a school bus.

More than 26 million students ride school buses daily, and the advanced safety features of today's school buses — as well as each driver's commitment to keeping students safe — make it very easy to love the bus.

About First Student, Inc.

First Student, Inc. — a division of Cincinnati, Ohio-based FirstGroup America — is the largest provider of safe, reliable, sustainable student transportation services in North America. The company transports approximately 6 million students every day in the U.S. and Canada, using a fleet of more than 54,000 buses.