

How a Chicago-Area District Improved School Security, School Bus Safety and Communication using FirstNet

Bellwood School District 88 Switches to Communication Network to Improve Safety

When Bellwood School District 88 sought a new communication system to help improve student safety and school security, the director of transportation, Tyreese Stafford, chose FirstNet. Headquartered in Cook County, Illinois, Bellwood is located in a western suburb of Chicago, where higher crime rates are an ongoing community concern.

To better protect the 2,500-student district and its seven schools—one pre-kindergarten and one preschool, four elementary schools and one middle school—the district implemented FirstNet to improve school security and bus safety for its 800 students on 23 buses.

FirstNet is the dedicated communications tool created with and for public safety – and those who support their vital efforts which includes school transportation personnel.

“*The biggest concern we have is security for our students and FirstNet provides good, reliable communication to help address that.*”
said Stafford.

Stafford learned of FirstNet when researching better safety and communication tools for the district’s school buses. Features that caught Stafford’s attention include FirstNet’s push-to-talk, which offers the ability to communicate with multiple groups of people at one time via mobile devices. Most importantly, he saw that FirstNet provides schools with near real-time tracking of school buses and instant communication between district staff, and even uplifted priority access when working with fire and rescue.



“There are many different options available with FirstNet that can benefit a school district greatly,” said Stafford. “You have two-way communication, tracking options, and other capabilities we need to be sure our students are safe and secure.”

In the end, Stafford believes FirstNet offers real benefits over past services used by the Bellwood School District.



“School administrators, custodians, school security—in addition to bus transportation—can communicate through FirstNet’s network, which means we have the most important information available to the people who need it no matter the circumstance,” said Stafford.

How can FirstNet Help your School District?

Student safety while in transit to and from school is the number one priority for parents, schools, and school bus drivers. That’s why FirstNet offers its powerful broadband LTE communications platform to help keep schools connected. FirstNet allows school bus drivers to stay connected so they can focus on what is most important.

With FirstNet, school districts can receive the following benefits:

- Maintain access to voice, data, video, images and texting when emergencies arise
- Communicate easier with an AT&T Enhanced Push-to-Talk plan
- Get enhanced situational awareness with innovative apps and devices

FirstNet currently has over 1.2M FirstNet connections and 11,000 public safety agencies and organizations on its network. Coverage reaches 2.61 million square miles of the nation.