

# Leveraging Multiple Transfinder Solutions to Transform Student Transportation and Parent Communications

In New York, Chenango Valley Center School District streamlines transportation operations with Routefinder PLUS, Viewfinder, Stopfinder, Wayfinder, and Servicefinder



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Fortunately for Transportation Supervisor Jason Hibbard, his superintendent understands how critical transportation is to the mission of the district. In fact, Dr. Larry Dake, Superintendent of Chenango Valley Central School District in New York, states emphatically that “transportation drives everything we do.”

With that type of support, Jason helped the district adopt more technology to support their mission. It didn’t take Jason long for him to realize that Transfinder’s Stopfinder parent app could improve the communications between families and his department.

Jason had already seen how much his former district benefited from the app through Transfinder’s Routefinder PLUS, so it made sense.

“At Chenango Valley Central School District, there were a lot of other transportation initiatives that we wanted to address, so not only did we get Routefinder PLUS along

with the Stopfinder app, but we acquired Viewfinder, Wayfinder, and Servicefinder,” Jason says. “It made sense to get everything from Transfinder so we would have all the products under one umbrella per se. This also made it so we didn’t have to relearn each product. Yes, there are nuances between them, but they all generally operate the same way. Everything flows together.”

## Opening Communications and Providing Transparency for Parents

Jason has seen many benefits from each Transfinder product. The Stopfinder parent app specifically tackles the communication challenges that initially caused him to seek a solution in the first place. “It provides open transparency for our parents by allowing them to see exactly what the bus schedules are, the overall route, and where the bus is,” says Jason.

Additionally, parents can use the app to directly communicate with him and his department. “They might ask, ‘Why did you add five minutes to the estimated arrival time?’ and, since we have that data at our fingertips, we’ll be able to have a conversation with them by saying something like, ‘At this particular stop, a student was five minutes late or there was some road construction,’” explains Jason.

For Jason, the biggest benefit has been that it catches about three quarters of incoming phone calls on a typical day, especially in the morning. “Very rarely does the phone ring,” he says. “I’ll get up at 5:30 am, and I’ll start getting Stopfinder messages on my phone so I can immediately react and respond to parents. Now I don’t have 20 voicemails sitting on my phone.”

## Simplifying Route Changes and Driver Management

With Routefinder PLUS, Jason appreciates the ability to compare multiple routes. Now, he can easily move stops around on the platform’s digital map to see if any combination leads to efficiency gains. Districts can also collapse and combine multiple runs. “This is now a simple process on Routefinder PLUS,” he says. “We can just move the kids from one bus to another, and Routefinder reroutes everything.”

This particular functionality can also help whenever a district hires more drivers. Creating new runs is, as Jason says, very easy.

## “A Big Deal” for Building Staff

Viewfinder specifically helps the building secretaries at Chenango Valley because they are constantly hearing from students and parents multiple times a day. “The fact that Viewfinder allows them to get all the pertinent transportation information they need on a student with a simple click is a big deal,” Jason says. “They no longer have to go back and forth with calls or emails. Viewfinder has been huge for our building secretaries.”

Viewfinder also works well for field trips. In fact, Chenango Valley recently used the solution to support a local district that couldn’t complete necessary tasks because of staffing shortages.

In regard to Servicefinder, the district is still learning how to fully leverage the software, but Jason says it has already helped them identify a better process for tracking inventory. “We used to have shelves of old parts for buses,” he says. “We don’t have that anymore.”

## Gaining Buy-in From Parents

While every product has been beneficial, Jason didn’t always receive immediate buy-in from the community. To help spread the word to parents about the Stopfinder app, he got in “everybody’s face with it.” He attended open houses and registration nights, flyers were made, and information was posted on the district website and Facebook. “Once the word got out, boom! Now, parents are looking at Stopfinder app all the time because it’s reliable.”

There was also some questions when Chenango Valley began allocating RFID tags for tracking students on Viewfinder, since they would replace the usual student IDs that the district had been using for years. To get parents on board, all Jason had to do was simply communicate that the new cards would let them see if their kid got on or off the bus.



## Improving Buy-In with Training

Since numerous offices across the district would use Transfinder technology, Jason worked hard to ensure everyone understood the software, including building secretaries with Viewfinder. “I have a middle school secretary who doesn’t need to see information about the elementary kids, so I had to teach them how to filter this information out,” Jason explains.

Of course, some folks needed more convincing. Especially the bus drivers’ use of the driver app Wayfinder.

“Our drivers are primarily retirees, so they are fairly resistant to technology or change, so we made a very big push before school started with hands-on training,” he says. “We spent a whole day with Wayfinder alone, just teaching drivers how to use it.”

When drivers needed additional assurance, Jason or his staff ride with drivers and help them through the issue. Each time, drivers quickly realize that whatever has been bothering them isn’t a big deal.

Since the initial rollout, this type of hands-on help and communication continues. According to Superintendent Dr. Larry Dake, Jason makes sure that everybody in the main office knows that he’s accessible.

“We’ve created a culture where we talk about transportation all the time, regardless of whether it’s for troubleshooting or making the process better. We’re all involved,” says Dr. Dake. “We make sure that everyone knows that the buses aren’t just on some other part of the district in a random building. It’s a central part of what we do. If it’s seen as a separate entity, then it doesn’t become a core part of your operations, and, at Chenango Valley, transportation drives everything we do.”

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