



## Maine Department of Education/Transportation Case Study – October 2016

### RSU 9: Mt. Blue Regional School District

Serving Franklin and Kennebec Counties

#### District Profile

RSU 9 proudly serves the communities of Chesterville, Farmington, Industry, New Sharon, New Vineyard, Starks, Temple, Vienna, Weld, and Wilton. The district covers Franklin and Kennebec counties in Maine and transports 1,800 of the 2,300 students that are enrolled. The district transports students to 5 Elementary, 1 Middle, and 1 High School using 36 buses that the district maintains. Altogether, including field trips, the district travels 530,000 miles a year.

#### Solution

Richard Joseph, Transportation Specialist, joined the district in 2009, just as the state was beginning to roll out the student routing transportation management system with Transfinder. The district immediately jumped on board, as they already owned the company's flagship routing program, Routefinder 'Pro', as well as Infofinder 'le' for field trips and district-wide communication, so they could begin to save on their annual support fees right away. The district had been paying \$3,900 annually in support and maintenance fees. There were immediate annual savings as support and maintenance fees were now covered by the State.

Mr. Joseph had not worked with Transfinder previously or with any other routing software, and since Transfinder was already implemented at the district he just needed some instruction to familiarize himself with the tools, and learn additional tips along the way as the needs arose. Mr. Joseph could attend webinars and three days of classroom training at the Maine State School Transportation Safety Conference which occurs annually at Sugarloaf.

Extended-year programs require new bus routes to be mapped every summer as there are all new students and new routes for each program every summer. The routing module makes a long difficult task easy and quick with the ability to manage safe and timely routes and stops.

#### Benefits

In addition to the trip and internal and external communication modules as well as mobile communications, which have been extremely useful in managing a safe and efficient transportation office and leaving less room for error, the district reduced the number of buses traveling to one school from 5 to 4. Although one of the new routes is longer, the savings in deploying one less bus, included payroll, benefits, bus fuel, bus maintenance, bus inspections, bus replacement, and vehicle insurance is significant year-after-year. Streamlining field trip



requests through Infofinder 'le' has increased the accountability of district staff to follow the proper approval process, including deadlines to request vehicles for trips. Often times, prior to using a software system for requests, a teacher could put a request in late resulting in either there not being enough drivers or buses available. And the staff would have the expectation that a driver would show up to take the class on their trip. Using the field trip module also ensures that more eyes from administrators see the requests and must approve them before resources can be allocated from transportation. This helped organize transportation operations shifting from crisis response to planned response.

Finally, the routing system offers a very easy way to figure out what time a route should start in order to get it to its final destination at a specific time. This has saved a great deal of time, and simplifies creating routes for new programs or for the extended year program. Mr. Joseph can simply tell the routing software that it must get to school 'A' by 8:30 A.M., traveling at 35 mph, and Transfinder will reverse the route to its beginning point telling you what time the trip must start.

As the first tool Mr. Joseph turns on each day, he says "Transfinder has been a very good program, and more people should use it. I'm glad the state has it." He also recommends that you should be in the software every day, so you stay fresh on the software and use it to your advantage, which is as an excellent safety and management tool. "Transportation operations run a lot smoother with Transfinder."

In addition, at the end of each year when the mileage of the bus routes, sports trips, and school field trips must be reported to the state, Mr. Joseph can simply run a customized report, and all of that work is completed for him by the Transfinder application. Year-end reports that used to take hours to prepare are now ready in minutes.

### **Testimonial**

Richard Joseph, Transportation Specialist

Email: [rjoseph@mtbluersd.org](mailto:rjoseph@mtbluersd.org)

Phone: 207-778-4307, ext. 2

Address: 108 Learning Lane, Farmington, ME 14938

Jonathan Chalmers, Director of Support Services

Dr. Thomas J. Ward, Superintendent of Schools

Website: <http://www.mtbluersd.org/>