



How a Trip Management Platform automated paper processes, enhanced student participation, increased parent engagement, and brought a school community together.

Elias Bernstein Intermediate School 7

Located in the Borough of Staten Island, Elias Bernstein Intermediate School 7 is a New York City school spread across three grade levels — six, seven and eight.

With staff at Elias Bernstein striving to ensure its 1200 students participate in its large range of events, field trips, extracurricular activities and support programs, Principal Dr. Nora De Rosa said that managing those services — and school trips in particular — had become exhausting for administrators, teachers and support staff alike.

With an innovative vision for Bernstein Intermediate, Dr. De Rosa was keen to embrace technology-led solution to solve this challenge. We caught-up with Assistant Principal, Dina Testa, to discuss their Operoo journey.



The Challenge

Paper-based and disparate processes to approve, plan and manage school trips were massively inefficient for staff, while negatively impacting student participation and parent engagement.



The Solution

Operoo streamlined and digitized the whole end-to-end trip management process in a single automated workflow, including permission slips, integrated payments, and anytime access to Blue Card information.



The Results

Elias Bernstein has completely transformed the way it plans, communicates and manages field trips, resulting in superior parent engagement, equity and access for students, and reduced administrative demands on school staff.



Challenge

Trip management had become a nightmare — for everyone

Working with paper-based processes to approve, plan and manage school trips was increasingly inefficient and had begun to consume an unsustainable number of staff hours at Elias Bernstein.

“Collecting parental consent and payments was particularly time-consuming,” said Testa. “Staff had to issue multiple manual reminders, telephone parents, and follow-up with kids who had left paper permission slips and payments at home. In fact, most of the time, students simply left them crumpled at the bottom of their school backpacks, never making it home in the first place.”

On top of this, Elias Bernstein struggled to manage all the payments for every field trip. Testa said the school had no systemized mechanism for tracking payments.

“Children would often arrive on the morning of a trip and state that they had paid,” said Testa. “But, we had no record of payment or an accessible method of verification,” said Testa. “Additionally, parents would frequently say that they never received payment requests, leaving them equally exasperated.”

The inverse problem was also commonplace. While parents could pay for some field trips through the school website, consent could not be given as part of that same process. Additionally, staff were left trying to match payments to specific trips and parent consent.

“Inevitably, parents often thought that submitting payment through the website also counted as consent,” said Testa. “Kids would frequently arrive for a trip in the morning, only to be told that they had no permission slip so could not attend.”

“*Simply put, parents and staff just didn't want to deal with all this paper, and the associated manual processes, to try and track all of our events. We needed a solution that could automate and track all our school trip processes in one easy-to-use, mobile ready platform.*”

Solution

Automating permission slips, payments — and everything in-between

For Testa and Elias Bernstein Intermediate staff, discovering Operoo was a little like love at first sight — they just knew.

“*Previously, we'd never been able to find anything that met our needs,” said Testa. “Then we found Operoo. There was no other system out there that could take the whole trip management process online in a single automated workflow.*”

Now, teachers don't have to produce, manage or chase endless paper forms. Operoo takes care of it all: From internal trip approvals, to creating, distributing and automatically following-up permission forms, collecting consent and payments, taking roll call, and securely accessing students' emergency contact cards (Blue Cards) from any device — even when offline.

And the parent community are seeing the benefits too.

“Parents love it,” said Testa. “Parents can give permission for their children to attend trips with a couple of clicks, and sign with a swipe of the finger, via the Operoo mobile app.”

Even if it gets to the morning of an outing and parents have forgotten to give consent, teachers can call their cell and stay on the line while they submit permission in under a minute. Parents can also access Operoo straight from the school website.”

Elias Bernstein also chose to add payment submission as a compulsory step within their trip consent forms. That way, both the school and parents know that, when permission is given, payment has been too.

But the benefits of streamlined, digitized and integrated permission and payment workflows extend beyond field trips — for both parents and teachers.



"Now, with Operoo, it's basically just one click for all the consent forms and contracts for parents," said Testa.

"Previously, the first day of school used to mean 15 pieces of paper for parents to wade through. As a parent, not just an administrator, I see how much easier Operoo makes things on both sides of the fence."

Testa said that the impact of Operoo's permission and payment workflows could be evidenced throughout a range of school programs — from extracurricular study groups and basketball sign-ups, to parent volunteering, student - teacher contracts, as well as collation and access to Blue Card information.

"We run an after school test-preparation program at a cost of \$155 per student," said Testa. "For the last few years, I've got 80 kids involved."

This year, using Operoo, we're already up to 128 kids and we haven't even hit the due date — so I know they'll be more!

"Last year, we had a poor turnout for our basketball program. Now, the amount of interest is overwhelming — we almost had too many registered! We've also consistently asked for parent volunteers, through our PTA, to help out at school events. Previously, we've been lucky to get a dozen volunteers. Today, we have more than 200."

"These are all great examples of notices going home, being read, and being returned. Operoo is a real life saver," said Testa.

But Operoo hasn't just made life easier for parents, teachers and increased parental engagement. It also facilitates student participation and safety too.

"We also distribute our student - teacher contracts via Operoo, which ensure each child brings the classroom supplies they need to participate," said Testa.

"There's no more begging students. Operoo automatically identifies and sends out reminders to parents until each student comes to class fully equipped. Operoo automated follow-ups are amazing."

Operoo also provides streamlined workflows for the collection, updating and access to digital Blue Cards. Authorized staff know exactly what to do, and who to call, in an emergency.

"We manage and update Blue Card information for both students and staff with Operoo," said Testa. "Previously, teachers had to physically go to the main office to request files."

" Now, staff have anytime access to emergency information for all their students, straight from their phone — even when offline.

And, parents no longer have to stay up all night filling-in traditional Blue Cards, and providing repetitive information for every field trip their child attends. "

15 TO 0

PARENTS NO LONGER HAVE TO COMPLETE 15 PAPER FORMS ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

2000%

INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PARENT VOLUNTEERS

160%

INCREASE IN SIGN-UPS TO BERNSTEIN'S TEST PREPARATION PROGRAM



Results

“It’s now second nature. We’ve had a huge amount of parent buy-in.”

Elias Bernstein Intermediate has completely transformed the way it plans, communicates and manages field trips and other school processes.

Instead of manual, repetitive and disparate paper-based practices and procedures, Operoo’s school workflows platform automates those processes. The result? Increased parent engagement, equity and access for students, and reduced administrative demands on school staff — all while providing traceability and accountability.

Testa said that teachers now feel as though they are missing something, when on school trips, as they no longer need to carry a huge binder full of paperwork.

“*Our teachers have embraced Operoo for field trips, and its mobile app in particular. Feedback has been very positive from both staff and parents, who are now able to work together to increase the participation rates of our students, while providing excellent care, with Blue Card information available with a single touch.*”

So successful has the transition been, all digital Operoo forms distributed to parents, including payments, have a 98 percent response rate — without any manual follow-up. In fact, Elias Bernstein processed over \$100,000 worth of transactions through Operoo’s integrated payments capability in the first three months of use.

“Of our 1,200 students, we have fewer than 10 who are yet to sign-up to the platform,” said Testa. “We’ve had a huge amount of parent buy-in.”

And the benefits stretch far beyond school trips too.

“*Wherever we used to use paper — be it sports or study group sign-ups, Blue Cards, or any type of permission or approval request — we now use Operoo for everything we do,” said Testa. “It’s second nature for all of us at this point. It really is a seamless system.*”

Testa added that while implementing such significant change had its challenges, Operoo delivered the support needed to make Elias Bernstein successful.

“The help Operoo gave us was amazing; I’ve never before received help like that from any company,” said Testa. “The Operoo team were responsive to our needs and delivered top notch support you just can’t beat. Honestly, we feel like we want to stay with v forever. Its people make it such a good experience.”



OF OPEROO FORMS AND PAYMENT REQUESTS ARE RETURNED WITHOUT ANY MANUAL FOLLOW-UP

