



CUSTOMER SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

Client Spotlight: *Marana Unified School District*

THE CLIENT

The Marana Unified School District is a K-12 school system in south central Arizona. It covers one of the largest geographic regions of any district in the state, a 550 square mile area northwest of Tucson. Almost 13,000 students were enrolled in the district's 17 schools during the 2009-2010 school year. They are supported by a teaching, administrative, and support staff of 1,800 full, part-time, and substitute employees.

THE PROBLEM

Like many districts, time had caught up with the "siloes" student information system in use across the Marana USD campuses. Although it had served the district well for many years, the strain of a booming enrollment, increased compliance requirements, and pressure to improve education outcomes at all levels had exceeded the systems' capabilities. A powerful new solution was needed; yet, the district also had the same budget constraints that most districts are experiencing in this economy. To justify its purchase, a new system would have to deliver significant value in the form of measurable productivity gains and/or cost reductions.

Several benefits a new system could provide were obvious. Replacing "siloes" systems with a single integrated solution would deliver immediate value through reduced software and hardware costs, lower maintenance and training expense, and the elimination of redundant data entry tasks. Newer systems could also more fully automate the district's class scheduling process. And Marana USD teachers were still using paper gradebooks instead of newer electronic versions, so that academic histories were not being shared from one year or one school to the next, and parents had only a limited perspective of student progress between reporting periods.

Less obvious were the benefits of a web portal implemented by one of the district's schools in an effort to expand

communications between teachers, students, and parents. Using the website, teachers were better able to communicate, parents became more involved, and several remarkable student turnarounds were achieved. However, updating content in that system was labor intensive for teachers and administrators, with the result that data was not always current or complete. Other potential benefits of the website were offset by lower teacher productivity as updating the content detracted from their regular responsibilities.

THE SOLUTION

The GENESIS™ Student Information System (SIS) from Edupoint Education Systems was selected by Marana USD after a team assessment of leading SIS solutions. GENESIS is a centralized, modular, web-based SIS solution with industry-leading features and functionality that resides on Edupoint's Revelation Technology™ platform, a Microsoft .NET-based rapid application development platform that enables customizations and integration to be quickly implemented. The district installed the entire GENESIS solution suite, including its TeacherVUE™, StudentVUE™, and ParentVUE™ modules.

Edupoint has a dominant market share in Arizona where it is one of the leading solutions that meets with state reporting requirements. The GENESIS application is well regarded for its intuitive user interface and streamlined workflows. Edupoint assisted Marana USD to develop a customized training program, and district employees were quickly productive with the new system. The ParentVUE and StudentVUE modules provide secure access to comprehensive student information for students and parents. The GENESIS suite is tightly integrated with a common database, which means that data entered once can be shared by all modules.

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THE RESULTS

The GENESIS solution was rolled out to all schools in time for students to register for the 2009-2010 term and was an immediate success. Students used the system to submit preferred course requests, which eliminated that data entry task for school staff. Counselors simply reviewed each student's preliminary class schedule to approve or modify their choices, and then match them to available class space. The district estimates that automated scheduling functionality saves 15 staff days each year.

The completed class schedules are automatically synchronized with the electronic grade book within the TeacherVUE classroom management module and post to the StudentVUE and ParentVUE modules that enable constituent access through a web portal. And, the electronic grade book automatically backfills all student information from the SIS data base for each class. When teachers return for the new year, a grade book for each of their classes is already set up with accurate, up-to-date information and histories for each student, including health and discipline records and past academic achievements. Also, teachers can import their lesson plans and assignments from the previous year instead of creating a new curriculum each year. Again, eliminating those redundant data entry tasks saved costs and increased productivity, and the data is more accurate. Teachers can now devote more time to activities that improve education outcomes. Needless to say, starting the year with a fully functional grade book was also a big morale booster for teachers.

A significant factor in the willingness of teachers to adopt the new system relates to the fact that it is a true K-12 solution; that is, the solution supports standards-based grading for elementary schools and traditional grading for secondary schools. One particular feature that elementary teachers embraced was the auto-population of the standards-based report card from the grade book: with one click, teachers now can fully populate a standards-based report card from their grade book, thereby saving hours of time previously spent on this task. For secondary teachers, the grade book automatically calculates end-of-term grades and with a single click, a teacher may post all grades in to the grading tables in GENESIS.

The integration of the SIS database, teachers' grade books, and the parent/student web portal also tremendously

enhanced communications. Once teachers understood that maintaining the electronic grade book was no more difficult than the paper system they had been using, the benefits of that information being immediately accessible by everyone became apparent. Teachers saw incremental time savings from not spending class time distributing test scores or researching missed assignments for any student. Students and parents could see their grades and class assignments online 24/7.

The web portal also made students and parents accountable. Class assignments were always available online, including any required attachments, such as a worksheet or source materials. Students had no excuses for missing assignments, even if they were out with an excused absence. Likewise, parents could easily monitor their children's performance and confirm daily homework assignments. Attendance issues were also minimized as the system notifies parents and designated guardians in real time if a student is absent or tardy to any class. Essentially, the GENESIS solution provides the transparency and information exchange required to build trust. And research has shown that trust is important for academic achievement. The greater the degree of mutual trust that exists among educational stakeholders, the more likely it is that academic performance will be realized.

Acceptance of the parent/student portal has been amazing. From a student population of just under 13,000, the site was viewed more than 2.5 million times in the first year. More than 80% of the district's households have created accounts on the system. To ascertain the level of training and help those users would need, the district launched the system without any support and waited for the support calls to come. There were almost none. Parents and students were able to set up their accounts and navigate the site without assistance. Student participation is 100% from grades 6 through 12, and many younger students also access the system.

The GENESIS SIS system has achieved every goal Marana USD had for their new system. Cost reductions from elimination of redundant data entry tasks and improved workflows will provide a substantial return on investment in the short and long terms. More importantly, education outcomes have improved as a direct result of increased parental involvement and student accountability.



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