

# Rochester City School District and Pearson: Analyze; Implement; Succeed!

## QUICK FACTS

- 44,000 students from preschool through adult
- 59 schools
- Student body includes children from 28 foreign countries speaking 35 different languages
- Wide range of backgrounds and heritage among the District's U.S.-born students

## CHALLENGE

The Rochester City School District (RCSD) in Rochester New York has a rich history of excellence in urban education and provides quality education for more than 34,000 students in pre-K through grade 12, across 59 schools. An urban and highly diversified school district, RCSD is unique in that the district encourages open enrollment and maintains several highly specialized secondary schools. As a result, the district faced several challenges related to efficiently managing the abundance of student data it generated. Prior to engaging Pearson, RCSD was using a mainframe application as its student information system (SIS). The outdated application lacked key functionality, user access, and reporting capabilities. It also generated high support costs, created ongoing maintenance, and suffered from a quickly dwindling number of district personnel capable of supporting and maintaining the system.

When considering the ideal application to suit their specific needs, the district formulated a vision of an advanced student information system that would allow both school and district staff to quickly access student information from anywhere, at anytime, district-wide. And due to the district's unique model for open enrollment, where a large number of students travel between various schools based on their course selection, RCSD needed a solution capable of tracking the location of individual students throughout the day. The district launched a formal RFP process in 2004, which ultimately resulted in the selection of Chancery SMS as its new SIS. Chancery SMS offers a proven, award-winning, enterprise-class SIS that can be customized to fit the growing needs of medium/large, urban districts.

## QUICK STUDY

### Challenges

- District encourages open enrollment and maintains several highly specialized secondary schools
- Outdated mainframe application used as student information system (SIS) lacking key functionality, user access, and reporting capabilities
- High support costs
- Constant maintenance
- Dwindling number of district personnel capable of supporting and maintaining the system

### Solution

- Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) project and Gap Analysis to identify functionality improvements between the existing SIS processes and those of Chancery SMS
- Project manager, engaged by Pearson, and business consultant to facilitate the BPR effort and train the RCSD project team on its BPR methodology
- Customized software solutions developed by Pearson:
  - Customized lottery management system to support the district's open enrollment policy
  - Several other significant customizations
- Chancery SMS student information system
- New computer hardware: centralized servers and workstations in every classroom

## SOLUTION

To kick-off the engagement, the Pearson team worked with the school and district staff at RCSD to conduct a Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) assessment and associated Gap Analysis, identifying functionality deficits between the existing SIS processes and those of Chancery SMS. The project's Executive Sponsor, C. Michael Robinson, saw the implementation phase as a key opportunity to make significant improvements to the district's operational processes and policies. He subsequently organized a district project team to participate in the process and analysis. The project team consisted of a wide range of district constituents including school data clerks, secretaries, counselors, registrars, and a variety of administration staff. Additionally, Pearson engaged a project manager and a business consultant to facilitate the BPR effort and train the RCSD project team on its BPR methodology.

The BPR effort uncovered several gaps in functionality between RCSD's existing SIS, the district's desired solution set, and Chancery SMS. Pearson and the district project team analyzed these gaps and developed comprehensive bridging strategies to overcome them. These strategies consisted of specific changes to existing district processes as well as customized software solutions developed by Pearson, including two sophisticated lottery systems designed to handle Kindergarten and Secondary School student applications based on RCSD's open enrollment policy.

With a revised set of business processes and the elimination of related gaps, Pearson and RCSD began to configure Chancery SMS for deployment in the 2006-2007 school year. The team began by populating the setup tables, configuring screens, and designing the reports necessary once the system went live. The district turned on the production database in March 2006, allowing schools to begin enrollment, registration, and Master Schedule development for the 2006-2007 school year. Additionally, the district engaged in a production pilot for Summer School 2006 – allowing all Secondary Summer Schools to use Chancery SMS that year. The production pilot served as an effective means of identifying and correcting any process, technical, or functional issues that existed prior to the official start of the school year. The district went live with all modules operating successfully for the opening of the 2006-2007 school year.

## Benefits

- Increased focus on student data analysis and data-based decision making aimed at helping students increase their learning potential
- Increased teacher productivity as a result of being able to directly access student information and efficiently enter attendance and grades
- Timely, strategic district decisions and analysis of data from various perspectives, pattern identification and the ability to see the big picture
- Ability to automate workflow features to increase efficiency, produce and optimize master schedules
- Ability to monitor daily and period-by-period progress of students

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## BENEFIT

The efficiencies created by the implementation of Chancery SMS at Rochester City School District have enabled teachers and administrators to increase their focus on student data analysis and data-based decision making with the aim of helping students enhance their learning potential. With quick and easy access to student performance data, RCSD can now make timely, strategic decisions and analyze its data from various perspectives, identifying patterns, and viewing the “big picture” through teachers, schools, grade levels, standards achievement, and demographic patterns. District administrators can use Chancery SMS’s customizable program management solution, automating workflow features to increase efficiency, produce and optimize master schedules with greater ease, and monitor not only the daily progress of students and their attendance, but also their physical location within the district.

Chancery SMS has also lowered support costs allowing the district to better manage instructional and administrative decisions over the long-term. The district’s ability to support Chancery SMS has been assured by the smooth knowledge transfer provided by Pearson’s dedicated project team.

“Pearson was able to come in, analyze our business processes, identify existing and potential gaps and customize a solution to meet our district’s specific needs,” said, C. Michael Robinson, Project Executive Sponsor, Rochester City School District. “By implementing Chancery SMS, we have created increased efficiencies and cost-savings district wide, while simultaneously allowing our teachers and administrators to make more informed decisions aimed at helping students increase their learning potential. On top of that, Chancery SMS gives us increased peace of mind in knowing we have a fully-scalable solution capable of growing alongside our district’s evolving needs.”

## ABOUT PEARSON

Pearson is the global leader in educational publishing, assessment, information and services, helping people of all ages to learn at their own pace, in their own way. For students preK-12, Pearson provides effective and innovative curriculum products in all available media, educational assessment and measurement for students and teachers, student information systems, and teacher professional development and certification programs. Our respected brands include PowerSchool, Chancery SMS, Pearson Inform, Scott Foresman, Prentice Hall and many others. Our comprehensive offerings help inform targeted instruction and intervention so that success is within reach of every student. Pearson’s other primary businesses include the Financial Times Group and the Penguin Group.