



Challenge

Each day principals, teachers and administrators work tirelessly to create a successful, high performing, and collaborative school environment. But for more than eight years, the Meriden School District struggled to achieve some of its goals for the 8,800+ students because accessing critical student data was a time-consuming, multi-step process. From insufficient user access to functional limitations, Meriden educators faced a growing number of shortcomings with CIMS, the district's legacy student information system.

Without a web-based student information system (SIS), the Meriden School District of Meriden, Connecticut lacked the access to real-time data and the analysis tools to make timely decisions that impact student performance. Under CIMS, the twelve-school district and its principals were unable to communicate and/or share data in real-time and could only provide data access to a limited number of users. End-users encountered several roadblocks with the system including: cumbersome paperwork, complex query tools, limited screen functionality, and lack of report customization. In all, the legacy system limited the Meriden School District to using the SIS for scheduling, demographics and grades only.

Teachers, guidance counselors and other staff members were frustrated by information silos for data like grades and progress reports. In fact, counselors and parents did not have access to student grades until the end of each semester, which prohibited them from helping students in need throughout the term. This was in part due to the report card process at the district, which typically took two days to complete.

In an effort to create an efficient, accessible system that enabled teachers, parents, and students to play a more active role in the academic process, the Meriden School District chose to upgrade its entire technology infrastructure with a customized, centralized, and paperless solution that would positively impact student performance and build a more collaborative environment.



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Mike Grove, Supervisor of Instructional Technology for the Meriden School District

Solution

In 2006, the Meriden School District officially moved towards a web-based technology infrastructure by upgrading its student information system from CIMS to PowerSchool Premier, the first student information system designed from the ground up as a web-based solution. After a brief review of other vendors, the Meriden School District chose to continue its relationship with Pearson: PowerSchool Premier was a solution that was highly regarded by the district's new IT director. From the onset, Pearson worked closely with the district to ensure a smooth transition while also keeping the migration costs low.

With an interoperable, web-based system in place, Pearson and the Meriden School District deployed PowerSchool Premier during the 2006-2007 school year.



Over the course of one school year, Meriden integrated two standout features of PowerSchool Premier: PowerTeacher and the parent portal. Both are designed to decrease administrative tasks for teachers to allow for more instructional time in the classroom and increase the role of parental involvement through enhanced school/home collaboration.

PowerTeacher, Pearson's online grade book, and the parent portal would enable students, parents, and teachers to perform tasks and work together more efficiently. By saving time on manual tasks like attendance and entering grades, Meriden teachers can dedicate more classroom time to instruction rather than administrative work. The parent portal creates a forum for collaboration between parents and teachers, and provides parents and students with real-time access to student information.

Meriden's principal needed an interoperable, centralized reporting feature to streamline and track key academic data recorded by all of Meriden's teachers. The district decided to integrate Pearson Inform simultaneously, a performance reporting system that gives principals access to intuitive reports on student achievement and make it easier for schools to target assistance, measure progress, and inform decisions.

Benefits

Principals, teachers, administrators, counselors, parents and students have all experienced the positive impact of the PowerSchool Premier solution in the Meriden School District. One of the best features of the new system is a more efficient, streamlined reporting process. Since implementing the SIS, the district can now complete report cards in less than ten minutes, a process that used to take each school two days!

Today, students and parents receive electronic reports and can check grades and assignments throughout the semester 24 hours a day/7 days a week through the online parent portal. In addition, guidance counselors now have access to real-time grades and reports, which enables them to tackle student performance issues immediately without waiting until the end of the semester when it may be too late to make a difference.

"We needed a web-based system that would allow us to communicate with our colleagues and parents and students more efficiently," said Mike Grove, Supervisor of Instructional Technology for the Meriden School District. "By upgrading from CIMS to PowerSchool Premier, we've been able to create an academic environment where students are more accountable for their performance, parents can get involved on a consistent basis, and educators are equipped to make better decisions that impact student achievement."

With the addition of PowerSchool Premier features like the parent portal and Pearson Inform, educators and families are working together to ensure that the individual needs of Meriden students are being met on a timely basis. Pearson Inform has enabled internal district assessments and served as a predictor for educators in identifying areas of need for students. The parent portal has encouraged students to play a much larger role in their academic performance while also increasing the lines of communication between teachers, parents, and students. Since September 2008, the Meriden parent portal has received more than 60,000 hits from parents and students with students logging on three times more often than parents.



About Pearson

Pearson, the global leader in education and education technology, reaches and engages today's digital natives with effective and personalized learning, as well as dedicated professional development for their teachers. This commitment is demonstrated in the company's investment in innovative print and digital education materials for preK through college, student information systems and learning management systems, teacher professional development, career certification programs, and testing and assessment products that set the standard for the industry. The company's respected brands include Scott Foresman, Prentice Hall, Addison Wesley, Benjamin Cummings, PEMSolutions, Stanford 10, SuccessNet, MyLabs, PowerSchool, SuccessMaker, and many others. Pearson's comprehensive offerings help inform targeted instruction and intervention so that success is within reach of every student at every level of education. Pearson's commitment to education for all is supported by the global philanthropic initiatives of the Pearson Foundation. Pearson's other primary businesses include the Financial Times Group and the Penguin Group.

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Since becoming a PowerSchool customer, the Meriden School District has participated in the SIS community by becoming a member of the Northeast PowerSchool Users Group, which is run by school users with support from Pearson. Currently, more than 60 districts take part in this group, which enables districts to share best practices and ideas in educational technology.

While no technology upgrade is easy, the impact of PowerSchool Premier on the Meriden School District and its constituents was well worth the effort as it continues to have a positive impact on day-to-day classroom learning in the district. Through this technology, all Meriden educational stakeholders have become more accountable and involved in the academic success of this generation of learners.