

Elmbrook Benefits from Flexibility

The School District of Elmbrook, in southeastern Wisconsin, was in search of an integrated student information system (SIS) with the flexibility to satisfy the changing requirements of staff, administrators, and parents. As a commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) solution, the ability of Infinite Campus to accommodate some customization while maintaining data management reliability was the difference maker in the selection process.

Flexibility vs. Integration

Before 2005, Elmbrook was managing student data with a SIS application that supported customization of data storage and reports at the school level. However, the excess customization prevented this system from providing data integrity and consistent reporting necessary for the complexities of a district serving 11 schools.

Infinite Campus was chosen to provide a web-based, reliable SIS with functionality and flexibility necessary to address Elmbrook's needs.

"We were coming from a very local, easily customized system," says Chris Thompson, Elmbrook's Chief Information Officer. "However, it simply was not an integrated K-12 solution. Without integration, data was not easily accessible to all staff and administrators and reliability was a problem."

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Chris Thompson
Chief Information Officer
School District of Elmbrook

Gradual Customization

Elmbrook's selection of a SIS with COTS functionality for basic data management necessitated a new paradigm for staff and administration. The old habits and processes based on individual preferences available in the legacy system had to be changed.

Elmbrook spent almost two years standardizing key processes and defining data requirements to meet its district and state reporting objectives. Then, Elmbrook began to explore opportunities to develop custom applications and reports that maintained the integrity of Infinite Campus, yet was responsive to the unique needs of the district.

"Through many conversations with Campus Staff and active participation in the Campus User Group meetings, we were better able to understand the vision and direction of the Infinite Campus system. With this understanding, we could then start to make decisions about what additional features and functionality were of the highest priority for our district," says Thompson. "The flexibility of Infinite Campus allows us to focus on value-added reports and applications that contribute additional information about our students."

Chris Thompson
Chief Information Officer
School District of Elmbrook
Brookfield, WI
7,500 students

Determining Need for Customization

Elmbrook has three district technology goals:

1. Integrate technology with student learning initiatives.
2. Support continuous improvement through the development or acquisition of new applications.
3. Maintain system integrity.

In addition to exploring solutions that meet the district's technology goals and objectives, clear criteria for customization have been adopted. When a request for a custom application is made, four steps are taken to ensure that the customization is in the best interests of the entire district.

1. District technology personnel research the product to determine whether the functionality currently exists.
2. District representatives explore the ramifications of the change being considered through participation in the Wisconsin Campus User Group and discussion with Infinite Campus representatives.
3. Technology advisory groups evaluate the feature being considered and its potential impact on fulfillment of district technology goals.
4. Internal stakeholders provide feedback regarding the proposed development and its intended benefits.

Citing an example of the success of this process, Thompson describes the development of a customized standards-based report card.

"To support our district's adoption of standards-based grading and reporting at our elementary schools in 2006, we developed a user-friendly input tool and custom report card that eliminated fear and anxiety about the process of reporting progress on 30-plus standards each quarter. Although the reporting was more robust, the custom tool actually saved the classroom teacher time compared to the previous paper-based grading and reporting process."

Benefits of Customization

In the years since becoming a customer, the benefits of Infinite Campus to administrators, teachers, and counselors have increased. District personnel have the ability to collect, monitor and report data that would otherwise have required another application. Tools have been developed that match district needs without workarounds.

"We have been able to create a more complete product that contributes positively to a variety of our stakeholders," says Thompson. "Infinite Campus is unique in its ability to create solutions to meet the needs of any district."

Response to Intervention

To support counselors and teachers in their efforts to provide opportunities for student success and to monitor and anticipate academic and behavior concerns, a comprehensive set of information has to follow the student. Infinite Campus supports it.

"An initiative to record and share intervention information across our system was approved by the district. The customized, event-based tool developed by internal staff has dramatically changed the way our schools consider and record interventions," says Thompson. "Most importantly, interventions travel with our students to the next grade level and from elementary, to middle, to high school. What was once paper-based, poorly organized and seldom shared has been transformed and, combined with our integrated custom Infinite Campus dashboard, is now an effective tool that enhances each teacher's understanding of a specific student's learning needs."

Saving Time and Resources

Elmbrook's mission is to educate and inspire every student to think, to learn and to succeed. While student learning outcomes are the highest priority, budgetary and financial results are also important. Infinite Campus provides the tools for student success and fiscal responsibility.

"Having one system for student data management which combines both custom features and Infinite Campus standard modules increases data integrity and overall efficiency," says Thompson. "Being able to focus our development and support efforts around one platform saves time and resources."

After fine tuning and customizing for efficiency and productivity, Elmbrook staff and administration have come to rely on Infinite Campus to meet its needs, current and future.

"Infinite Campus is now familiar to all our users," says Thompson. "With a combination of our careful planning process and comprehensive testing protocol, each application we have developed has been received by our stakeholders with gratitude and excitement. Administrators and teachers easily understand how each custom application will positively impact our district and, directly or indirectly, benefits student achievement."

About Infinite Campus

For more than a decade, Infinite Campus has successfully implemented its solutions for customers of all sizes. Today, Infinite Campus applications manage more than 4 million students in 43 states. Infinite Campus customers range from districts with fewer than 100 students to those with more than 100,000 as well as regional consortia, state departments of education and the federal government.