

Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop Schools Achieve ROI Using Campus

In 2003, Gibbons-Fairfax-Winthrop Schools (GFW) realized they needed to update their system to centralize their data, improve communication and provide tools for data-driven decision making. After a thorough examination of available SIS vendors, there was no question that Infinite Campus met all this criteria, and more.

Searching for Updated Technology

GFW had been using JMC for four years prior to looking for a new SIS in 2003. At that time, the product did not have the technology tools that GFW needed to move their district into the future. GFW needed a web-based, integrated system that was compatible with Minnesota state reporting, and a company that provided a small school like GFW the technical support and training it needed.

“We began looking for a new student information system about five years ago, because our legacy system was not web-based and it took a large amount of technology time to manage and support the program,” said Ron Swanberg, GFW District Technology Coordinator. “There was a separate database for each school, making it impossible to use the program to analyze district-wide data. This also made state reporting difficult and backing up data was a challenge.”

Beyond the integration and web-based components, GFW was very specific on what they needed to update their system. “We wanted teachers to have the ability to access their grade book from any location,” said Ron. “We wanted a program that could give real-time information to parents about their student’s progress. We wanted an easy-to-use interface that non-technical staff could easily navigate.”

GFW formed a committee comprised of the superintendent, principals, an administrative assistant and a teacher. It analyzed three different programs (JMC, TIES and Campus) in areas of interface, features, modules, company reputation, support and training. Infinite Campus was chosen and implemented in 2004.

Experiencing a Smooth Transition

GFW scheduled a midyear implement that worked well for them. “We had time to introduce Infinite Campus to our staff and train them before they actually used the program. Staff had time to learn the system and be comfortable for the beginning of class the following fall,” said Ron.

With good planning, comprehensive communication, and cooperative team work across the district, GFW had a successful data conversion, implementation and training, and were ready to hit the ground running when school started the following fall.

“The midyear implementation was easier to schedule Campus Trainers and it allowed us to do our registration and scheduling for the next year using Infinite Campus,” said Ron. “The timing worked well for us.”

Early Benefits and Opportunities

An immediate benefit of Infinite Campus for GFW was the centralized database. This was a valuable tool to analyze data and make informed decisions. District staff developed a variety of custom reports specific to the district, which provided clean, updated data.

“We were able to get a handle on our school’s demographic data,” said Ron. “When we combined our three separate databases into Campus, we were surprised at the inconsistencies in the data, including names of parents, addresses and phone numbers.”

The web-based system was met with great enthusiasm. “Many teachers spent their evenings or weekends entering grades in a paper grade book. Then, they would transfer the grades into the database

Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop
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District Technology Coordinator
Gibbon, Minnesota
776 Students

when they got to school. When teachers learned they could enter grades into the actual database from the comfort of their homes, or any place, at any time, they thought this was great.” said Ron.

“Also, the reaction to the Campus Portal was very positive. At first, staff had concerns about what information parents would see on the portal and how quickly they would see the posted grades. Now, however, these are no longer concerns. And, it’s not just parents using the portal, all of our high school students have portal accounts, giving them the opportunity to manage and be responsible for their school work.”

GFW has been using the Campus Portal for several years to inform parents and students, not only about grades, assignments and attendance, but about district notices, school closings, upcoming meetings, etc. It’s an effective communication tool in a world that demands immediate information and encourages engaged participation.

GFW Gets Return on Investment

Each year districts are faced with a close scrutiny of financial responsibilities. Using Infinite Campus has helped GFW save time and money, so funding can be directed to teaching and learning.

“Since we implemented in 2004, we have experienced a return of our investment in several ways,” said Ron. It includes:

1. Campus helped streamline school processes, such as state reporting and lunch management.
2. Technology management has been simplified. GFW no longer needs to update applications on individual computers, and there is confidence that the data is backed up.
3. Campus hosts GFW data, eliminating the cost of purchasing additional software, maintaining servers, and needing additional staff.
4. Campus Fees has saved time for staff.
5. Campus Portal has eliminated mailing time and associated costs.
6. Using Campus Food Service has helped us improve our lunchroom efficiency.

Enhancements that Really Help

Having used Campus for many years, GFW has seen evolution of the product.

“Over the years, there have been many positive changes to Campus,” said Ron. “The Campus Grade Book looks like a traditional grade book. Teachers learn how to use it quickly and realize the benefits of its capabilities to manage student assignments and inform parents.”

In addition, Campus Scheduling is flexible and lets GFW create a complex middle school schedule. Student registration for next year’s courses has been streamlined so students, counselors and administrators can effectively manage scheduling tasks. It has taken an otherwise extremely complex task and made it manageable and effective.

The Voice of Experience

GFW has been using Infinite Campus for more than four years and is a leader in Minnesota with innovative, forward-thinking technology for the district. “Other districts looking to change their data management system need to look closely at everything offered,” said Ron. “It is critical to make a list of district needs and goals. It is helpful to contact vendor references, visit sites using the program, and involve stakeholders in the selection process.”

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District Technology Coordinator
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With a concentration of schools in southwest Minnesota, GFW is very involved with a Campus User Group, that meets consistently to share “tips and tricks,” develop best practices and provide support to other users in their area. “We appreciate the cooperative interaction between our User Group and Infinite Campus. It is a group of professionals, people who use the product every day, sharing ideas and working with Infinite Campus to get the most out of our investment,” said Ron.

The Best SIS on the Market

Districts can choose from many data management systems. But for GFW, Infinite Campus is the best product on the market today.

“Infinite Campus has a real edge over other SIS systems,” said Ron. “The uncluttered interface, the ability to turn off features we don’t need and having the modules we want, helps us do our job better. The security features were important to us and met all our requirements. For a school our size, the technical support and training we have had throughout our time with Infinite Campus has been outstanding.”

The bottom line for GFW, however, was Infinite Campus, the company. “It was immediately apparent to us that Infinite Campus was a company with a vision for education,” said Ron. “It consistently keeps the program, and us, updated as educational needs have changed.”

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 3 million students in 44 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.