

Mt. Pleasant and The Three Student Information Systems

Mount Pleasant School District has a history with student information systems much like a fairy tale. They had outgrown their long-time SIS, and in their opinion, it was “too small.” They found a different system, but within months realized that it was “too hard” to use. They, then, selected Infinite Campus and found a system that was “just right.” With Infinite Campus they know that their student information system is reliable and will bring them into the future with confidence.

Investing in Change

Mt. Pleasant realized they needed to upgrade their student information system. Although the provider they had used was basically functional, it was not a web-based system and had limited potential for realizing the strategic goals for the district.

Dr. John Roederer, superintendent of Mt. Pleasant School District, was on the committee to choose a new vendor. “We really needed two things. Not only a student management system, but a system that would allow us to do analysis of student performance so we could enter test scores and track student achievement.”

The first vendor they selected appeared to have the capabilities required, but within months they experienced problems with data integrity, clarity in product navigation, customer service and support.

Lisa Dunn, secretary to the principal, had worked closely with the different systems on a day-to-day basis and was an important resource when determining what was needed in a new system. “We found the new vendor less user-friendly than our first system. We also noticed data instability that required us to reenter data several times. We were used to personalized support and this new vendor provided little to no support, and when they did, it was too late.” Within the year, they chose Infinite Campus to bring them into the future with confidence.

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Lisa Dunn, Secretary to the Principal
Mt. Pleasant, Iowa
2,115 Students

District-wide Database and Analysis

Infinite Campus provided Mt. Pleasant with a district-wide, integrated database that shares information between buildings and users. The web-based system allows educators, parents and students access to information anywhere, any time.

Dunn makes all calendar changes for the district and immediately found that Infinite Campus saved her time so she could focus on other responsibilities. “For me, it was the ease of maneuvering from screen to screen and student to student that was a real advantage,” Dunn said.

With Infinite Campus, calendar information provides the basis of all student-related data. Students are enrolled into a calendar, courses are made active for a year and state reporting information is based on it. It is a critical function for the district and one that Dunn has found to be completely manageable.

The system also serves as a district-wide transactional data warehouse with student data entered once and leveraged across the entire district, supporting data-based decision making.

Having a system that provides embedded data analysis tools that help end users analyze the data, as well as being easy to understand and manipulate, was very important to Mt. Pleasant. Access to all data elements is readily available with built-in, ad hoc and third-party reports.

Proactive with DoE

Mt. Pleasant wanted assurance that Iowa state reporting requirements were kept updated. “I know that keeping up with state reporting is a big deal for Infinite Campus,” said Dunn. “We were at a user meeting and heard that Infinite Campus had stayed late the night before to make sure they had everything set up for us to manage state reporting. This is so important to districts in Iowa and will get even more important as the years go on.”

Because of the complexity and individuality of state reporting, an Infinite Campus staff person is dedicated to each state to research requirements, build relationships with the state department of education and work with districts to meet state reporting standards. The Infinite Campus District Edition allows each district to provide data in compliance with the requirements requested by a particular state.

Portal Improves Student Success

Allowing parents to participate in their student’s education was a high priority for Mt. Pleasant. They wanted to offer parents the opportunity to be informed about their student’s educational experience via a portal access.

After the Infinite Campus implementation, the Campus Portal was activated and the immediate feedback from parents was, “We love it. It’s great.” Parents now have access to their student’s grades, attendance, school notices and will soon have access to their student’s cafeteria activities and expenditures. Currently, more than half the parents access the Campus Portal on a regular basis for the middle and high school. This continues to grow every day as parents ask each other, “Did you look at this information from the school?”

“The Campus Portal is beneficial in improving student success,” said Dunn. “Parents talk about how they track student assignments to ensure work is being completed on time. The district has noted a marked improvement in student achievement in direct relation to parent involvement.”

In addition, parents appreciate the ability to email (via the portal) a teacher with questions or concerns regarding their student. In return, teachers realize it is a good way to communicate with parents without having to wait until conferences. Student achievements can be immediately shared with parents, and academic problems can be addressed and turned around quickly so students can get back on track.

Customer Service and Support

Mt. Pleasant is supported by Campus Channel Partner, V.i.P.S., Inc., based in Marion, Iowa, providing a knowledgeable perspective of Infinite Campus close to home. V.i.P.S. President, Scott Weiss, has built a close relationship with Mt. Pleasant, which adds a personal touch to the support and services they get from the Infinite Campus corporate office. “The people at V.i.P.S. have been very, very good. They’ve put in extra effort to make sure things are working well for us,” said Dunn.

Mt. Pleasant also accesses the corporate office support representatives. “The most important thing about Infinite Campus is the excellent customer service,” said Dunn. “Their support team has been patient with our questions and responsive to our requests. I get answers back either the day I submit the ticket or the next morning when I come to work.”

Mt. Pleasant requested that the data conversion and implementation process be accelerated. And although there were concerns because they had corrupt data, it all went better than expected. “We were afraid of losing data like we had in the past year, but that didn’t happen,” explained Dunn. “Everything we asked for was there. And with minimal training, the high school principal was able to achieve 95 percent of the scheduling on the first run with the Campus Scheduler.”

In addition to personalized customer service, support and training, Mt. Pleasant participated in the Infinite Campus and V.i.P.S. sponsored Iowa Interchange event. This is an opportunity for users to spend two days learning about updates, receiving some additional training and having the opportunity to network with other Campus users in their area.

“We really learned a lot at the Iowa Interchange,” said Dunn. “We were able to sit in on training labs and talk through our individual issues. It’s a great idea to send district users to this event.”

Managing the Cafeteria

Mt. Pleasant purchased Campus Food Service in September 2006. “I recommend the point-of-sale system highly. We have had numerous districts come to our school to see how it works. The system is user-friendly for our staff; it’s fast and efficient. The reports are easy to read and the information is accessible in real-time,” said Dunn. “That was a real advantage for us.”

Campus Food Service streamlines cafeteria operations to establish individual food service accounts, track food purchases and design flexible menu layouts. Parents can access information regarding their student’s food purchases and balance amounts as they are being entered in the cafeteria.

Happily Ever After

After so many varied experiences with SIS vendors, Mt. Pleasant finally has the system that will meet their needs for years to come. Infinite Campus is forward-thinking and keeps pace with changing technology and how it best serves education. It is a company that looks outside the box and is responsive to customers.

“I would heartily recommend Infinite Campus to any district looking to change or update their data management system. It has everything we wanted,” said Dunn. “And, seeing so many districts switching to Infinite Campus, including very large ones, speaks volumes. Mt. Pleasant knows it made the right decision.”

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 2.5 million students in 40 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.