

## St. Paul Overcomes Urban Challenges

St. Paul Public Schools is a large urban district in Minnesota with over 41,000 students. The district faces many challenges including managing a large volume of student data, a high-level of student mobility and communicating with non-English speaking parents. They selected Infinite Campus as their student information system to help them overcome these challenges and found additional financial benefits resulting from improved data management.

### Managing Large Amounts of Data

St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) in 2000 distributed an RFP for their district located in the heart of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. SPPS at that time was managing 60 to 80 different databases, typically one per building, with over 8,000 teachers, staff, and administrators inputting and utilizing student data.

“We did the RFP in two steps,” says Connie Feil, director of the Department of Educational Technology for SPPS. “The first step was to evaluate student management systems based on three primary criteria. First, we wanted a centralized student information system. The second was that it would be web-based and cross platform. Finally, the vendor needed to be ‘gold-standard’ certified by Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS).”

MARSS collects student data required by more than one area of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning via one system. Data collected by MARSS is used for a variety of purposes including state aid and federal grant allocations.

Those vendors meeting these criteria were invited to respond to the RFP. The second step in the RFP process was to evaluate those vendors responding to the RFP against a broad set of detailed criteria which included a centralized system to manage student data.

Combining data from the disparate data systems at SPPS proved to be a challenging project for accurate and timely MARSS reporting. The data would be sent from each building in the district to the central office in various formats. It would then be manually cleaned and assembled into the right format and order. A copy of the cleaned data from each building would then be used to aggregate into a district file for submission. After this process was completed, the building data would be sent back to the originating building so it could be imported back into their database.

“State reporting for the MARSS report was a problematic situation for our district,” continued Feil. “Since implementing Infinite Campus our MARSS reports have been error free for the past four years, we have not had to add staff since we are more efficient and we have been able to get every eligible dollar available from the state.”

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**Department of Education Technology**  
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Connie Feil  
Director, Department of Education Technology  
Michael Baumann  
Technology Services Manager

St. Paul, Minnesota  
41,000 Students

## Tracking Student Mobility

Large urban districts face the issue of student turnover annually between 25 to 40 percent. This mobility is prompted by fluctuations in the job market, upward mobility, poverty and homelessness making re-enrollments hard to predict. As an urban district, SPPS is no different in trying to track students in this highly mobile society.

The issue of student tracking was resolved using Infinite Campus since an individual student is assigned a unique student ID when they are enrolled with the district. The school can enter an end date on the student's enrollment record when they leave the school. The new school in the district can then enter a new start date on the same enrollment record without having to re-enter the student's demographic information and historical records saving time during the registration process.

"The ability of Infinite Campus to manage this student movement for us is excellent," says Michael Baumann, technology services manager for SPSS. "We have improved our business practices and discipline in processing students when they leave or re-enter our system with Infinite Campus."

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**St. Paul Public Schools**

## Communication Challenges

SPPS in 2003 launched St. Paul Learns, a comprehensive information system to connect parents and guardians with what is happening at school. At the heart of the system, is the Campus Portal which allows parents and guardians to go online to see exactly what is happening with their students.

"When we implemented Infinite Campus, the Internet was a novel way to distribute information to parents, guardians and students," says Feil. "Now they expect the Campus Portal to provide them with all of the information they need about grades, assignments, attendance and fees."

SPPS believes that inner-city parents and guardians have less ability to log on to their child's records. To combat this, SPPS joined forces with the city's public libraries, the mayor's office and major employers such as 3M to encourage public and at work access. 3M, in fact, has trained many of its employees not only in how to register for the system but to encourage these employees to help train other parents and guardians on how to register to use the system.

"The urban district is different than a suburban district in the use of technology to communicate with parents and guardians," states Baumann. "In St. Paul we have many different cultures and they are not used to using technology which makes the use of the Internet and email a challenge for some of our audiences."

In addition to St. Paul Learns, SPPS will be using Campus Messenger with voice to serve its constituents whose first language is not English.

"With Campus Messenger with voice we will be able to communicate with our audiences who do not use English as their first language," says Baumann. "We will be able to have someone on our staff with the language capability, such as Hmong or Somali, record a voice message which we can then distribute to the parent and guardian's preferred telephone numbers - work, home, cell or other."

## Integration Leads to More Funding

Infinite Campus provides users outside of the traditional teaching, staff and administrative areas advantages as well. This is accomplished through the data being managed in one database providing complete integration. Other areas within the school system can access and utilize the same data through a secure web-based interface. These users can generate reports and analyze any data set maintained in the system.

"Our grants and funds development office gets more student-related data than they were ever able to obtain before we implemented Infinite Campus," says Feil. "The data is more reliable which is leading to more dollars being allocated to SPPS."

Infinite Campus is also acting as a proving ground to centralize other aspects of the district's student services.

"We are ahead of yesterday and continue to move forward with the help of Infinite Campus," concludes Feil. "It was hard for the end users to see the big picture use of the centralized data in the beginning but we now have a solid foundation to do other things like centralize our library and food service systems."

## 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.