

Austin Public Schools: Many LMS Options, One Integrated Solution

AUSTIN, MINNESOTA / 4,575 STUDENTS

A Problem

Sometimes it takes a frustrated 10th grader to really drive a point home. Lost trying to navigate her seven-period day, this particular 10th grader was in tears. She didn't know which Learning Management System (LMS) to access for her next class. Should she log into Moodle, or Schoology, or her teacher's website or Infinite Campus? The very tools intended to make her learning easier were, instead, making her cry.

As told by Corey Haugen, Director of Research Evaluation & Assessment at Austin Public Schools in southern Minnesota, this story put a human face on a problem he was seeing in the district. Always one to encourage teacher experimentation, Haugen knew that the underlying cause of that 10th grader's frustration was the multiple systems being used by district staff. "Part of this was due to our exploration. We had some teachers that were trying Schoology. We've had the Moodle environment for years so we had a number of teachers using that for their content delivery. And then there are the Campus components."

The (Integrated) Solution

An Infinite Campus SIS district since 2009, Austin Public Schools had long used the system to streamline administrative processes and promote stakeholder collaboration across the district, but those "Campus components" presented a new opportunity for Haugen — an opportunity to move away from a fragmented patchwork

About Campus

- ▶ We are the most trusted name in student information. Infinite Campus applications manage 7.3 million students in 45 states.

of third-party systems and towards a single integrated solution. A solution that would, hopefully, prevent any more tearful students.

Haugen's opportunity came in the form of Campus Instruction, a new collection of LMS tools integrated directly into Austin's existing Infinite Campus SIS platform. For Haugen, the new LMS features can improve the way things work within the schools by offering a more consolidated and integrated solution when compared to Moodle or Schoology.

The Test

To test his theory Haugen set up a pilot program in 15 classrooms to see how students liked using one of the key features of Campus Instruction, Online Discussions. "The feedback from the kids was pretty overwhelming that they liked Discussions 'way more' than the Moodle and Schoology options. It was really well received." Haugen also found that students appreciated having one integrated platform for all their classes. "They're already used to the Campus Portal environment for traditional grade lookup, attendance checks, etc."

For teachers, Haugen's pitch came in the form of a scenario. "How would you like it if the assignment submitted to you online is sitting right in your gradebook? Open it up right there, put the score in, save and you're done." Teachers quickly understood that using Campus Instruction LMS tools were going to make their days much easier by eliminating redundant data entry that comes with managing multiple systems.

The Rollout

With both teacher and student support, Haugen started to roll out Campus Instruction tools across the district

starting with fifth and sixth graders at a newly opened STEM school. "At that site we had great traction with the Campus LMS tools; teachers loved it, kids loved it." The positive response meant that the following year Campus Instruction was introduced to seventh and eighth graders. "There wasn't a hard sell to focus our middle schools on using the LMS features inside of Campus," Haugen recalled. "They were more than willing to try it."

The IT Director

As for Corey Haugen himself, his role as IT Director meant that Campus Instruction LMS tools offered even more benefits beyond the classroom. "From an IT perspective we do not have to import/export information from one system to another. It's just all integrated for the end users." Moving from Moodle and Schoology towards Infinite Campus made sense to Haugen. "The main components people use in any LMS are the content delivery tools, assignments submission and discussions. Infinite Campus is doing that very well now. So why wouldn't we use an integrated solution?"

The Future

Speaking about Infinite Campus, Haugen agreed with the path the company is taking. "Campus realizes that this is an integral part of moving to that next level. Not just an SIS but a full-fledged learning tool. I know that we've got support from all levels at Campus going into the future." With the success he was seeing in the classroom along with the IT benefits a single-solution offered, Haugen joked, "in Austin Public Schools, my goal is to have total LMS domination with Infinite Campus."

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*Corey Haugen
Director of Research Evaluation & Assessment
Austin Public Schools*