

Community Unit School District 300

CARPENTERSVILLE, ILLINOIS / 20,000 STUDENTS

Community Unit School District 300 (CUSD 300), which includes 15 diverse communities, is located in Chicago's northwest suburbs. As one of the fastest growing districts in the Midwest, it needed a student information system (SIS) that was innovative and effective. With a board-directed goal to move forward quickly, CUSD 300 chose Infinite Campus to provide a mid-year implementation, appropriate training, and an SIS to streamline district processes.

CHALLENGES

A large fast-growing district must have an integrated, Web-based SIS that is accessible to all stakeholders and can provide accurate and up-to-the-minute data. Prior to implementing Infinite Campus, CUSD 300 had a variety of data management practices.

Addressing the need for a comprehensive data management system, Debby Hartman, CUSD 300 Instructional Technology Coordinator said, "We really did not have an SIS that was adequate to meet our needs. The only people who had access to our previous system were our secretaries and, occasionally, a principal."

CUSD 300 formed an ad hoc committee made up of teachers, counselors, administrators and Central Office staff. According to Hartman, "We narrowed our search and did an analysis based on trials and presentations to see which system would work best for us. After viewing and discussing all contenders, Infinite Campus was the best fit for us."

SOLUTION

Changing from one data management system to another presents challenges. Changing systems during the school year adds some additional challenges.

About Campus

- ▶ We are the largest American-owned student information system. Campus applications manage more than 6 million students in 43 states.

"It may have been easier if we were a smaller district. But we have 26 schools and one of our biggest difficulties was all the data-entry differences," said Hartman. "Things as simple as secretaries entering 'Avenue' as Ave, Ave., and Avenue become a big thing."

To avert the risks presented by a February conversion, CUSD 300 was required to run the old system and the new system in parallel. Fortunately, the district had personnel with experience as well as professional support from Infinite Campus to make it happen.

Leading the way was CUSD 300 Chief Technology Officer, Eric Willard. With extensive experience as the technology decision-maker at schools from Texas to Illinois, Willard was familiar with all aspects of implementing an SIS. Willard found Infinite Campus to be an effective partner during the process.

"It went very well. As a matter of fact, having been in this business for 20 years, I have done a lot of conversions. This was perhaps the most organized conversion I've ever been involved with," said Willard. "It is one of the real strengths of Infinite Campus."

When a district the size of CUSD 300 changes its SIS, thousands of people are affected. Before the benefits of a comprehensive integrated SIS could be realized, training for uniform data entry and stakeholder acceptance had to take place. Infinite Campus provided CUSD 300 with training tailored to accelerate acceptance of a new system. Willard states, "Decision makers should

not use the cost of training in their criteria for selecting a SIS, because it will make vendors reduce the cost of training in their proposals. We planned for double the amount of training listed in the vendor's proposal. This assured a successful implementation. We chose to budget a small incremental amount up front for training, rather than pay a larger amount in lost productivity and support costs later."

RESULTS

Other schools looking for a new SIS are seeking information and direction from CUSD 300 because of its success with Infinite Campus. The district hosts in-house, half-day presentations for interested district staff, pairing them with staff in similar roles, including superintendents, counselors, teachers, secretaries and administrators.

"We enjoy sharing our success with potential Infinite Campus customers, because we want Illinois to have a strong Campus User Group," said Willard. "We tell prospects about what we did on a district level, then break out in role-specific groups so individuals can see how that part of the system impacts them. It's really working, because several new districts from Illinois with whom we met have recently become Campus Customers."

The district continues to grow by several hundred students per year, and the need for accurate and efficient reporting is becoming more acute. Reports such as ELL, early childhood, and mandatory discipline extracts have become part of routine reporting and more are added every year. Infinite Campus keeps up with new reporting demands in each release.

"Every time I'm in Infinite Campus, I discover something new. We have more accurate data than ever for state reporting. We no longer do it by hand or rely on 26 different secretaries to give us accurate information."

*Eric Willard, Chief Technology Officer
Debby Hartman, Instructional Technology Coordinator
Community Unit School District 300*