



A Measure of Success

Plano Independent School District builds its epicenter with SAS®

Jim Hirsch, Associate Superintendent for Academic and Technology Services, and
Doug Otto, Superintendent of Plano Independent School District (left to right)

Industry

Education

Business Issue

The school district required a better, faster and more accurate way to measure and predict student achievement and progress.

Solution

SAS® Enterprise Intelligence Suite for Education

Benefits

- Student achievement and growth benchmarks are exceeded.
- There is a low dropout rate.
- Many schools are in the 90th percentile for performance.
- Student outcomes can be predicted.
- Student data is quickly accessed.

To avoid surprises at end-of-year test time, the Plano Independent School District in Texas wanted a better way to measure student achievement and progress, leaving time to intervene with corrective action when necessary. To do so, the district turned to the SAS® Enterprise Intelligence Suite for Education. Now, Plano teachers can quickly access student data, use analytics to predict student outcomes and intervene to help students reach their potential. As a result, the district consistently exceeds its achievement and growth benchmarks, boasts a low dropout rate, and the majority of its schools are in the 90th percentile for academic performance.

For Plano Independent School District educators, looking at the percentage of students who pass or fail in a given year is no longer an adequate measure of student performance. With the SAS Enterprise Intelligence Suite for Education, the district now looks at how much a student progressed during the year and works with teachers to determine which instructional practices are working (and which are not) to help improve student achievement outcomes. In addition, Plano schools use SAS Analytics and SAS Reporting to measure program effectiveness – be it the reading curriculum or techniques for helping at-risk learners – much more objectively, as well as identify students who might be ready for a more challenging curriculum.

Information epicenter

“The SAS Enterprise Intelligence Suite for Education is the epicenter of

performance information for teachers, students and parents, and has become the engine for organizational performance information – such as staff certification, professional development, failure and attendance reports,” says Jim Hirsch, Associate Superintendent for Academic and Technology Services at Plano Independent School District.

Throughout the school year, Plano’s SAS Enterprise Intelligence Suite for Education platform is accessed by 4,000 teachers and more than 350 principals, campus and district administration staff members. Parents may also look at individual student performance, attendance, schedules and anticipated growth through the district’s Web portal.

Teamwork for Excellence



Amazing insight

“When new teachers come to the district from other locations, they’re amazed that they can see a student tracked throughout their academic history. They’re amazed with how much information they can process, the graphical growth charts and the educational path students have taken; there’s a lot of powerful data,” explains Dash Weerasinghe, Director of Assessment and Accountability at Plano Independent School District. “Using



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Plano Independent School District

assessment data, we use analytics to predict what student success will be in the state accountability exams. We look at past performance to predict success and can intervene in cases where a student is at risk of not meeting the standard.”

“We wanted to be able to put the right resources in the right place to affect student outcomes when it’s needed and not after the fact,” says Doug Otto, Superintendent of Plano Independent School District.

Even with a relatively low dropout rate, the Plano district has improved its ability to manage the risk of students leaving school before graduation with the help of a SAS partner, Futrix, who performs analytical processing using a tool developed with SAS software.

“Secondary school principals are able to investigate courses that have abnormal amounts of low performance,” explains Hirsch. “Based on that information, principals can work with teachers to intervene a lot sooner. Analytics has allowed us to add extra dimensions to our thinking.”

Always in demand

According to Weerasinghe, a key measure of the solution’s success is how often teachers and principals access data for instructional improvement.

“We’re happy with the level in demand for information, especially in the K to 8 grades,” he says. “The key metric is demand; how often teachers use it. The general consensus is that teachers are pleased with the system and with the speed at which data is available. It

saves them processing time so that they can spend more time improving their instruction. In the past, it would take days, weeks and even months to get information to those that needed it. Combining the analytics with the reporting enables much greater efficiency because it is done on the same platform. Since the data also resides in SAS, there was no data migration necessary. And, because the information delivery is also SAS, the process moves much faster.

“Today, we provide so much more information without having to increase headcount,” he concludes. “That’s all because of the SAS Enterprise Intelligence Suite for Education platform – the analytics are superior to many of the other products out there.”



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