



Larry Price, EdD, Superintendent of the Wilson County School District

Wilson County Schools gain information prosperity with SAS®

Industry

Education

Business Issue

The Wilson County School District needed quick and easy access to integrated data across all 24 schools in the system.

Solution

SAS® OnDemand for K-12 offers Web-based, secure access to both high-level and detailed data so that leaders can easily spot trends and make informed decisions.

Benefits

Saves time with self-service portals to critical information, fosters communication for more effective problem solving and increases fact-based ideas and solutions.

The Wilson County School District in Wilson, NC, was data-rich and information-poor prior to its introduction to SAS. The district, comprising 24 schools with 12,600 students, has robust data involving metrics ranging from absence and discipline issues to budget information and test scores. Before the district began using SAS OnDemand for K-12, this information was scattered across several different systems. There was no infrastructure in place to ensure accuracy, and the data was only made available at the end of each school year or later.

“We had data, but it was all in different places and we couldn’t get our hands on it in a quick, integrative fashion. If we wanted data, we had to call someone in IT, request reports and wait for the information,” says Larry Price, EdD, Superintendent of the Wilson County School District.

The situation changed when Wilson County began using SAS OnDemand for K-12, providing Wilson County Schools with:

- A solution that allows school leaders to easily spot trends and drill down into data to uncover root causes.
- Quick and easy access to data from disparate systems via a secure, Web-based portal without relying on IT to pull reports.
- Help gathering, cleansing and analyzing ALL data so school leaders can spend more time solving pressing issues and making fact-based decisions.

Get the data you need, when you need it

At the superintendent level, broad information is critical. At the same time, SAS enables Price to drill down into specific information as needs arise.

Price may have just five or six minutes to prepare for a board meeting and quick access to data is imperative. With SAS OnDemand for K-12, he can easily scan data gleaned from several areas within an integrated system. He can get a feel for key issues in each school or grade, allowing him to approach the meeting well-informed. He can then speak to high-level courses of action with credibility and certainty about best next steps.

“SAS equips us with information that helps us analyze trends, see patterns, explore possible solutions and share that information with people quickly, because we don’t have to spend hours pulling the data together. The worst thing that can happen is to get a call or letter from somebody who wants information and you have to figure out where the information is and how to get to it. With SAS OnDemand for K-12, we get it pretty quickly.”

For example, SAS helped Wilson County Schools discover that in one school year, there were 29,000 discipline incidences. After drilling down into the origin of these incidences, the school system realized that classroom disruptions – versus fights, drugs or weapons – were causing the most disciplinary infractions. As a result, the

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school system implemented a training program for teachers, bus drivers, etc. to address these disruptions, decreasing the discipline scenarios a great deal.

“Over five years, we reduced our discipline incidents by 60 percent working with SAS to uncover the problem and executing a plan of action,” explains Price.

Fostering collaboration, problem solving

The SAS solution’s Web-based approach allows everyone access to the same information at the same time. This fosters conversation and streamlines communication. For example, Price and a principal can look at data together online, saving the time and expense of a site visit.

“One of the greatest benefits is the ability to have my principals take a look at their data and tell me what they see as the most significant issues facing their school and the steps their leadership team is taking to resolve the issue,” says Price. “It’s a wonderful tool that’s facilitating communication – one of the biggest keys to success in a school district.”

The technology grants all levels in the school district secure access to

information that allows them to proactively track developments and address issues. This eliminates the need for school leaders to depend on IT to pull data for them – everyone has the power to retrieve information. “People aren’t sitting there waiting for your data request. They’re doing other things too,” says Price. “Now I have access to quick information all in one place and that is just absolutely fabulous for any school superintendent.”

Districtwide access to data also sheds light on problems in a way that people across the system can appreciate. “Having solid data allows us to explain what we’re doing in a way that people can understand,” explains Price. “Access to that data enables us to engage more people in solving issues in our school district. That’s exciting for us.”

Facts = better decisions

“We can’t get people to do what we want them to do because we say it’s the right thing,” says Price. “We have to prove ourselves by analyzing the progress we’re making, determining costs and proving that it’s working. If we decide that we’re going to take a certain course of action, it will be because the data supports it.”

Finding alternative sources of funding is vital to every school district, and SAS is helpful to Wilson County Schools’ grant-writing process. Using SAS, grant writers are able to quickly get an in-depth view of the trend that the proposed grant would address – whether it’s regarding discipline, attendance, financials or academic performance.

“We can see the trends because SAS has helped us pull the data together in such a way that we get good, accurate information quickly,” says Price. “Having that data makes the grant-writing process much more efficient and effective.”

Plans for the future

Price says that SAS, a longtime partner in education, listens to the district’s needs and continues to explore new product iterations in the pursuit of, for example, more data comparisons and pattern analyses.

“SAS is a proven company with a great reputation – and that reputation is well-earned because SAS is responsive to our needs and will customize features to give us the very best product that we can have,” says Price. “A year from now I expect that we will be light years further along in finding ways of using SAS to help us make even better decisions in our school district.”



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