

{ A case study. }

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Detailed needs assessment drives a successful student information system implementation for a large Texas school district.

The client

With a student population of more than 57,000, the Garland Independent School District (GISD) is the 14th largest school district in Texas and among the 75 largest in America. The school district is comprised of 71 campuses in grades K–12 and boasts a diverse population that speaks more than 100 languages and offers technology-driven campuses, magnet programs, and approximately 200 career and technical education courses.



The challenge



The Garland Independent School District was using a legacy, in-house, custom-built student information system (SIS) to manage student records, discipline, transcripts, the grade book system, and state reporting needs of the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). Its in-house programmers faced constant demands to maintain the system and stay current with state requirements and reporting needs. Additionally, the lack of access to the system hindered its reporting capabilities. GISD needed access to the SIS across the district, including every division up and down the organization.

A comprehensive needs assessment would allow the district to determine priorities across the district and develop a detailed RFP for potential vendors. In addition to the needs assessment, GISD sought a partner to guide an unbiased vendor selection process, from contract negotiations to implementation, within a tight five-month deadline.

The solution



Our K–12 experts utilized cross-functional expertise and methodologies to guide GISD through a comprehensive needs assessment in less than four months. Our thorough needs assessment included a detailed review and interview process of every division and department within the district, establishing the requirements framework for a new SIS. The assessment identified all functional requirements for the district, prioritized system capabilities, and led to the RFP development and final vendor selection.

A gap analysis was also conducted to identify the current state of its SIS and determine the critical functions needed to meet future requirements.

Once a vendor was selected, our experts led contract negotiations to ensure all required terms and conditions were included in the contract. This resulted in a fair, and favorable, long-term contract for GISD. Our team, as a third-party observer, oversaw the vendor implementation process, bringing confidence and understanding to GISD.

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The benefit +

The Garland Independent School District implemented the first phase of its new SIS within its original five-month timeline. It now has a robust product that allows the district to keep up with changing technology and state requirements in-house. The district's programming resources have been re-tooled from hands-on development to focus on data integration and reporting, providing valuable data analytics insights and day-to-day support. The added intelligence of the new system has helped GISD become more strategic with long-term reporting and the ability to look into trends like attendance and discipline and respond to intervention.

With over 80 interfaces required for go-live, the district needed a team it could rely on. Our multifunctional team of industry and technology consultants provided the necessary expertise and guidance for a seamless implementation.

The new system allows the needed access to the system which has aided in collaborative reporting across all divisions and departments. Additionally, not only is the new system web based, but it also features a mobile app. The freedom and usability of the app have granted more data access to parents, allowing them to be more engaged in the education of their children as they progress through their K-12 career.

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“The needs assessment is the most critical activity in your implementation process.

If you don't establish the right requirements from day one, it doesn't matter what product you put in place. It's not going to satisfy your needs. Having the expertise and guidance from the consultants of Plante Moran was paramount to a successful needs assessment and putting our best foot forward.”

— Jason Genovese, Director of IT Operations, Assets, and Budget at Garland Independent School District

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