Pennsylvania Department of Education: From Local Control to K-16 Data Warehouse

Local Control

In 1999, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) commissioned a study to determine the feasibility of implementing a statewide student identification system. The study concluded that because of the strong local control sentiment in the state, there would never be such a system. But that was before No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Impact of NCLB

It took a few years before state education agencies realized the impact of the data requirements for NCLB. PDE was no different. However, it soon became apparent that the way data were collected and managed was about to change forever. It was virtually impossible to meet the reporting and accountability requirements of NCLB without a longitudinal data system. A longitudinal data system required some way of tracking students from year to year, a student identification system. Governor Rendell responded during the first year of his administration by launching the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) initiative. In 2004, a statewide advisory council of education and government stakeholders was formed to help move PIMS forward and help build support.

First Things First – PAsecureID

During the summer of 2005, PDE applied for and received a 2006 US Department of Education IES Statewide Longitudinal Data System grant to help make the PIMS project possible. PDE knew that the first step in implementing a statewide longitudinal data system, a system to assign and manage student IDs was necessary. The eScholar Uniq-ID® for Students was selected in the fall of 2005. The success of the project is best described in a summary report to the US Department of Education.

"The PAsecureID project is by far PDE's biggest achievement towards the realization of our goal of a statewide longitudinal data system. PDE kicked off this project in December of 2005 with a very aggressive timeline of assigning a statewide identifier, known as PAsecureID, to each of Pennsylvania's 1.8 million public school students by June of 2006. By working closely with our LEAs, the LEA's SIS vendors, our assessment vendors, and our contractors, PDE was able to reach this goal on time and within the budget allocated. Since the project was such a success, program areas within PDE, such as early childhood, post-secondary, safe schools, and special education, have realized the power a unique persistent identifier has in regards to the ability to track a student's progress and have moved aggressively to have the PAsecureIDs integrated with their applications."

PIMS PreK-12

The primary goal of PIMS is to facilitate educational improvement for all students in Pennsylvania through more efficient and effective use of data. It includes enterprise-wide data collection, a data warehouse, and a reporting tool. After the success of the eScholar Uniq-ID® implementation, Deloitte Consulting was awarded a contract to implement the eScholar Complete Data Warehouse® solution in the spring of 2007. During its first year of implementation, PDE successfully collected and loaded demographic, school enrollment, and program participation on more that 1.8 million students. In addition, demographic and assignment data were collected and loaded for 170,000 staff, as well as data on almost 11.5 million course enrollments. During the first year of PIMS nine separate data collections were eliminated. Given the success of the first year, PDE began plans to expand PIMS to include assessment, special education, and financial data.

Post Secondary Expansion – PIMS PreK-16

Success breeds success. With the PAsecureID and the eScholar Complete Data Warehouse® solution successfully under way, PDE moved its attention toward expanding the PIMS project to post secondary education. The goal is to replace numerous separate and mostly aggregate data collections that include community colleges and universities. During the summer of 2008, the PAsecureID system, based on the eScholar Uniq-ID® for Students, assigned unique student IDs for students at 14 state system universities and 14 community colleges. Unique identifiers have been assigned to over 448,000 students enrolled in community colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher learning in Pennsylvania. This will soon be expanded to students at additional institutions.

PDE has formed a Postsecondary Statewide Data Council (PSDC) to review existing data collections and develop a data dictionary in conjunction with the PDE Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. eScholar and Deloitte Consulting are working with PDE as well. The initial data dictionary will include four main domains of data:

- Institutions – Demographics, characteristics, summary statistics, etc.

- Faculty – Demographics

- Students – Demographics, high school educational background, enrollments, tests/licenses/certificates, transfers, financial aid, employment, program participation, etc.

- Courses – Courses offered, course sections and the faculty who teach them, and students enrolled in courses

It can be said that the implementation of a data warehouse is a continuous process. PDE is well underway in the implementation of PIMS. It has used many resources in the educational and political community at all levels. Soon it will be possible to track and share data for students from prekindergarten all the way through their postsecondary education.

Highlights:

- Using eScholar Uniq-ID® for Students, Pennsylvania Department of Education was able to implement a successful system to assign and manage student identification numbers for its 1.8 million student body in six months.

- Since implementing the eScholar Uniq-ID® for Students, additional program areas within the Pennsylvania Department of Education, such as early childhood, post-secondary, safe schools, and special education, have recognized the power a unique persistent identifier has to increase their ability to track a student's progress.

- Implementing the eScholar Complete Data Warehouse® solution allowed the Pennsylvania Department of Education to eliminate nine separate data collections.

- Using the eScholar Complete Data Warehouse® solution will enable Pennsylvania Department of Education to track and share data for students from pre-kindergarten all the way though their postsecondary education.

About eScholar

eScholar is the nation's leading educational data system company. eScholar clients have achieved phenomenal success using our data management and analysis solutions to track and improve pre-K through postsecondary student achievement. Relied on by over 3,400 school districts across the country, eScholar transforms the way educators use and understand the data collected through a myriad of sources. For more information about eScholar, visit www.escholar.com.

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