TENNESSEE

SSIS Questions for Phone Testimonies from other States
Rhode Island Department of Education
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- 2 state-level systems in place
  1) Statewide student management system (SSMS)
  2) Education Information System (EIS)
     - existed before the SSMS – came about as part of a mandate to the DOE in the early 90's to collect student level data at the state level – each school district had their own locally-hosted student info. system and then had to upload it into the main system – was a mainframe system that didn't work – then another iteration which failed – the third attempt was the EIS
     - Still had the scenario with each district having their own and then uploading detailed (not just aggregate) data to the DOE (school calendar, class schedules of each student with teachers' names, daily attendance, promotion, retention)
     - Never worked well because the vendors that gave the local systems didn't understand how the DOE needed the info. uploaded – the districts didn't do it because it was not required
- PROCESS:
  - The state needed to manage the vendor – in 2003 they issued an RFP for the SSMS – had competitive bids – got 4 or 5 vendors that responded (can get us that list) – the winning bid was from Public Consulting Group with a subcontractor Century Consultants – Star Student or Star Base from CC and the Easy IEP from the PCC
  - 109 out of 123 districts use the SSMS which feeds the EIS
    - the others use what they choose to use – nobody was forced to use it
    - the school districts that use their local system still have to feed into the EIS which is not as extensive as what is in the SSMS
- QUESTION: Why wouldn't districts participate if there was no cost involved?
  - ANSWER: The ones that didn't participate were the larger ones (50,000+ students) – most had just been through a change locally to a different SIS in the prior two years – felt like they had already gone through a lot of transition/growing pains
  - The larger ones have given no indication that they're going to change
- FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION – SUPER-USERS:
  - we had some districts that rose to the top as super-users who took the time to learn the product so it meets their local and the state needs
  - we created regional user groups across the state and gave the super-users a stipend to meet monthly with the districts in their area to talk about common needs and techniques
  - their meetings showed that they could teach each other better than we could teach them
  - the feedback we got from these regional user group leaders led us to create How To guides for the common functions (enroll a student, roll over to a new school year, etc.)
- TRANSCRIPTS:
  - they transfer across districts
  - are also uploaded to higher ed. for lottery scholarships

- SCHEDULING:
  - we've had to work on standard ways to do scheduling so they get a full schedule to calculate them properly for ADM purposes
- TRANSFERS AND REPORT CARDS:
  - we can transfer students electronically rather than waiting for manual paperwork to follow
  - we can avoid duplicate enrollment of students
  - a standard format for report cards was agreed upon
    - The districts did this voluntarily – we had to tell them that in order for them to have a report card or an academic history label that looks like they want it to look, they had to agree on one format (the default format that came with the product)
- OTHER 14 DISTRICTS:
  - They create .csv files THAT they upload to our FTP site and we process them into EIS (started this ten years ago)
- QUESTION: Is there a difference in the quality of those on the system and those that aren't?
  - ANSWER: To a degree – the ones on the state level system we control how often we get the data (multiple times/week); others we have to wait for them to manually upload it
- QUESTION: Have you considered SIF for the remainder of the districts?
  - ANSWER: Yes. We got one of the first LDS grants in 2005(?) and part of that was to do a SIF pilot with one of the districts
  - we had a lot of conversations and worked through some of the tech aspects but the reason we never finished the pilot was due to budget cuts and regardless of whether we could or could not do it we had no money to fund it
  - I have mixed thoughts about SIF – when you see presentations on it it all sounds good, but to me it just shifts where the data-cleansing and quality checks are done.
- QUESTION: If a district went with the system, did they save locally by reducing staffing, hard/software costs, etc.? Are those who maintained their own system under pressure because joining would reduce costs?
  - ANSWER: SSMS eliminated need for hard/software at local level plus we paid for maintenance and support (based on ADM) and software licensing – can't quantify it for a district in particular
- QUESTION: Did the state give less money to those that didn't participate?
  - ANSWER: No, we didn't do that
- QUESTION: Does the state recommend products for add-ons (like emergency alerts)?
  - ANSWER: That's still local – we help them get the file that they need out of the SSMS in order to do that
- QUESTION: What access do the districts have to the back end database?
  - ANSWER: We use Oracle Discoverer as an ad hoc discovery tool – we gave them this to allow them to get at data they couldn't normally get at (at no cost)
- QUESTION: What would you do differently?
  - ANSWER: Our pilot year ended up being with 32 districts that volunteered due to the push to make it happen – it was too many
    - resource problem – growing pains – moving from their local to state level package there were multiple data packages to convert - an issue of being able to provide enough support – instances where we at the state expected the vendor to provide the customer support and they expected us to do it and neither had the staff needed to roll

out to that many districts – growing pains on hardware capacity because of too many at one time – rolled out over 4 years – by the third year we had it down – the first year should have been a lot fewer districts so we knew what it was going to take

- There are 500,000 students on the system which is half of the state.
- This year's cost was $2.40 per ADM for maintenance and support