MAINE

SSIS Questions for Phone Testimonies from other States
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BACKGROUND:

- started with the implementation of the state system in 2003 with NCLB
- the vendor who helped build the system didn't work out
- 2006 started planning replacing the state system and start providing a SSIS for the schools
- The legislature was looking at cutting costs but it was a mandate from the Commissioner – we weren't meeting state/fed reporting requirements with old system
- We wanted to reduce tech infrastructure in schools
- 6 or 7 vendors dominated – Powerschool was biggest (50% of students), School Master, some small systems used SchoolMax that was DOS based – the small districts couldn't afford to upgrade
- Went out to RFP – all specifications for the state system and specs for the local system – used Kentucky as a model (used Infinite Campus – they had a statewide system and mandated that everyone had to go to IC – fully implemented in 3 years – quick implementation)
- Charter schools are illegal in ME – some private that take publicly funded students but we treat them like small districts
- Not really a difference between the SSIS's effect on smaller vs. larger districts

CHOOSING INFINITE CAMPUS:

- Maine doesn't mandate it but pays for it (like South Dakota – one of the first with IC – they are down to one large district not on it yet)
- Our feeling looking at South Dakota was that more people would come on board – gave incentives – didn't want to mandate it – implementation and conversion costs covered by state and would pick up ongoing support costs
- The RFP was about a centrally supported system – didn't want to be in the tech business – looked for a vendor could do the whole thing – only two could – AAO and Infinite Campus – AAO had some issues in NCarolina (front page of NY Times)
- Looked at both functionality – big difference AAO is Oracle based and the infrastructure to support it is huge – IC is Microsoft based
- Pearson came in with PowerSchool but it didn't meet the needs as a state system – what about hosting? They said they could host 20-30,000 and we said we have 200,000. They were looking at regional servers – designed for small districts not a SSIS – they couldn't reduce the tech infrastructure in the schools
- 5 pilot sites – already had 3 using IC – 8 the first year; 28 last year; 36 now over 40% of students
- Wave 3 and wave 4 – slowed down by consolidation of districts mandated by the legislature which eliminated about 67 districts – down to 218 goal was to get down to 80 – we were

targeting the smallest schools/districts – we are not allowing them to convert to IC until they meet the consolidation rules. 45% of students on PowerSchool

- Goal over next year is to get down to two vendors
- IC is SIF.2 certified; PS is 2.0 certified as well – looking at moving just to those two vendors
- Goal is to get one – realistic – PS has a loyal base and a lot of resistance – have managed to get Bangor off it – Portland is moving this year (large district to ME is 7000 students)
- IC has functionality that allows schools to eliminate 3rd party vendors – we are getting a ME modified version of our IEP forms, etc. – those who have converted to IC and are using their special ed. Fields eliminated the extra cost of using a diff. vendor.
- Sample district – eliminated three vendors, servers and licensing in moving to SSIS
- IC district edition – all functionality just depends on what you turn on – we are moving toward a health system – vaccination rules of the state, etc. customized to meet ME needs – not much cost just tweaking and adding drop-down menus, turning things on and off

COST:

- A lot of the tweaking was built into the price
- did cost analysis on servers, licensing (PowerSchool is more a programming platform – a lot of districts were hiring people just for that SIS system – very expensive)
- those who made the conversion are saving $25,000/year
- speeds up reporting time
- reducing staff time – secretaries do less reporting and more using the data
- local tech support eliminated
- it is district money since they are picking up some of their own costs – the legislature stayed away from that
- the average cost to convert, implement and train is about $35,000 per district (small districts) – one time charge
- IC groups districts they're converting to share training, cut down on travel costs
- District edition - $4/student for license (normally six – but we have state edition); hosting fee by IC is $1/student + support and maintenance $2.50 = ~ $7.50/student – state picks this up
    - If they have more than 3000 students they get a local server; if you have 5000 the server is free; between 3 and 5000 you pay difference; small districts don't need servers; IC ships servers all set to go
    - We are not paying for the other vendors – they have to move to IC
- State edition - $2/student ($400,000 – 200,000 students); 75 cents for hosting; support & maint. = full state edition =$755,000/year (hosting environment is very good – adding servers doesn't cost anything extra)
- The formula doesn't discriminate – those who are using old have to pay for it
- Eventually that tech funding will get reduced – based on what a school should need not on what they actually spend (what state thinks they should be spending – complex formula)

RFP:

- formed focus group with 10 or 12 people – sat in on vendor demonstrations – those who went to the final 4 unanimously picked IC (most were PS users) – locals involved in that whole process made everyone think the state picked the right one

CONVERSION AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS:

- Not many problems at the beginning – IC did a good job with data conversion
- Takes about 6 weeks or less – they have it down to a good science
- They do conversion mid (Oct) and end-year (April up by September) – converting mid-year creates more issues (staff time, training); teachers run old system until the new year
- Can do a partial – some want to maintain some stuff on their old system
- Hard to do over the summer when teachers aren't there for training
- The training is very good
- There will always be resistance

INFINITE CAMPUS STATE EDITION VS. DISTRICT EDITION:

- primary data collection system – not a great system
- advantage is the syncing as a pure student system – we collect data on all personnel – IC struggled with that
- hard to get state edition to get what we want at the state level – a disappointment
- we're in the process of launching our data warehouse and are looking at moving some functionality to the data warehouse using SIF as the front end
- IC made a lot of promises
- they sold 5 state edition SD, MT, KY, ME, Bureau of Indian Education (all reservations use it – this only syncs to the feds and not to the state re: our reservations – they're dealing with 23 states with this)
- the five of us meet together – everyone's very happy with district edition not state edition
- Sept. 2007 Gardner Group ranked IC above all the other big ones
- Sept. 2009 did the same survey and confirmed district edition of IC is best – amount of functionality is huge – you don't pay for the extra modules – a lot of built-in functionality – can do all state reporting, rich local reporting – usability
- State edition allows student records to be transferred electronically from district to district – can also do this across state lines to others who have district edition
- we're looking at doing electronic transcripts with IC – XML transcript based on state standards – we will create one to go up to the U of ME system and others – so they can send it out – IC just finished it and will be doing some testing with a few districts and the U of ME
- Pearson and Chase Solutions on our data warehouse
- We learned a lot about SIF – changes in student records go right up to the state – unless you put in some very strict validation rules, it will accept anything – we have 15 grade levels, after turning on syncing we had 30 – we had to go back to IC to set strict rules
- A lot of the vendors give a huge amount of flexibility to the district but they don't think about mobility and how states operate – we are very strict about using one set of codes – state edition they can use whatever they want
- We validate as much as possible before it gets into the state system

WHY WOULD A DISTRICT NOT MOVE OVER?

- a lot posted on their website why they didn't – but not a lot was legitimate e.g. burden on teachers; doesn't have the kind of support but there are user groups that share code and solutions; tech coordinators would lose control; don't trust the state
- are seeing that others are saving $ and getting more functionality
- they're starting to see it

- We’re providing more and more centrally hosted state systems (school buses/facilities, management – all web-based – allowing schools to get rid of local contracts and get more functionality)

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE STRUCTURE (WEB-BASED, INFRASTRUCTURE, REGIONAL, CENTRALIZED)?

- State edition hosted at IC – would have been more costly for us because two fees – easier to move whole infrastructure (they have 2.5 million on their system – thinks we are only state that gave them the whole system)

WHERE DO PEOPLE GO FOR SUPPORT?

- Still have a state help desk
- district edition fees include support with IC (Custom Computer is their regional vendor who has been doing everything since the second year – but still state contract with IC)
- some via phone call, a lot through support portal – we monitor that since we pay for it
- were some issues with response time – they got overwhelmed but have added staff since then
- districts in Augusta formed a user group every 6-8 weeks meet – official IC user group – a lot of sharing of code
- Interchange is IC’s annual event and other NEngland district users go to it (2 days) – a lot of presentations are done by the users
- IC supports the state edition

DATA:

- Real-time data
- Data quality has improved; but our old upload system rejected data unless it was perfect
- with IC it’s not as easy to do that but we have developed an extensive training program as part of longitudinal grant
- a lot comes down to the secretaries, etc. how to use the data; IC took some time to get rules down at the district/school level
- Some other states put in a lot of data cleansing routines to report to districts to fix them – we just reject bad data so don’t have to do as much cleansing
- Re: Back-end database - we are on SQL server – data management is very complex – we do have access to it
    - we don’t give districts much access - they have read-only but IC makes sure they have good training before getting access (even read-only) – IC requires they know SQL server
    - we are reluctant to give people edit access to the data – some can use it well for reporting

REFLECTION:

- How much more efficient do you feel it is than what you had before?
    - Much more. The help desk is getting more calls about using data than reporting it. Reporting a lot easier. The staff that was supporting old system are now creating reports, less time trying to maintain the system
- Do you still have gaps?
    - Not on the student side as much on the staff side - over 40,000 people who work in the districts and all get reported to the state; linked with certification program – has been a struggle for IC

    - many SIS vendors don't understand how states operate – when we look at Oct 1 and April 1 data – they struggled with time-stamping data – the sync/overwrite stuff – fields that affect our funding formula like if a student moves it doesn't time stamp it
    - we can't ask IC where all students were at some past time – they are working on a fix – made it on district edition – but not for those who report to the state from other vendors
    - at secretary level a dialog box opens asking if this is an update or a change – if it is a change it will ask for you to put in the date – so we can see when that field changed – IC just implemented this but it has only solved the problem for those who have district edition
- Who has truly benefitted from the SSIS?
    - Districts really like it and feel it is a step up; has helped the state; eliminated vendors who only had a few districts; much easier from the state side (jealous of KY because they mandated it)
- If you were to do this over again, would you and what would you change?
    - We would do district edition and not implement the state edition
    - Would have written RFP differently had we known they wouldn't be able to do everything we needed
    - we would have gone to SIF at the state level– we are looking at getting SIF2.0 working and getting off the state edition – we could use that money to go to infrastructures and build on our data warehouse
    - if we use SIF2.0, we still want one system – because of the functionality (like Special Ed.) – easier to make changes with one vendor
    - we're thinking more and more about mobility so want horizontal sharing as well as vertical – IC to IC is really easy (vendor to vendor is like re-keying the info.)
    - VA pushing hard on SIF – just a standard not a real technology – we like that IC has built in SIF agents - IC hosts its own and is transparent to us (zone integration system)
    - would mandate district edition
    - going to a single district system statewide is definitely the right move – state reporting is easier with something like SIF2.0

- IC doesn't think like a state – they are learning – they're losing interest – ours is the last state edition they sold in the last 2 years