



Pass Christian Public
Schools Case Study

COMMUNICATION AND STUDENT DATA COMBINE FOR REMOTE LEARNING

THIS DISTRICT RETURNED TO
SCHOOLSTATUS JUST IN TIME

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pass Christian Public Schools was an early adopter of SchoolStatus. The district onboarded in 2013 when the software was specializing exclusively in accountability and data visualizations. Unfortunately, the district never fully utilized the technology and SchoolStatus was put on the chopping block as new district leaders sought to eliminate an overabundance of programs and get back to basics. However, after working with data on endless excel spreadsheets, and a disappointing stint with an analytics provider, district leaders chose to bring back the comprehensive support and analytical reach of SchoolStatus—and not a moment too soon. Now with industry-leading capabilities for communicating with parents, SchoolStatus helped prepare Pass Christian to communicate with all families during the unexpected COVID-19 shutdown.

NEW DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Superintendent Dr. Carla J. Evers joined the team at Pass Christian School District in 2016, ready to meet high expectations from the community. The school district consistently ranks at or near the top of state rankings, and Dr. Evers had no intention of losing any ground. In an interview with the Sun Herald that year, Evers explained her approach. “I plan to look around the area and make observations, to get a feel for how things work,” she said. “Being a good listener is an important attribute to have. Right now, I’m listening to the principals and staff,” shared Evers. “I also want the parents to know that I’d like them to come up and talk to me. I will be very open with them as superintendent.” Dr. Evers’ tenure was starting off on the right foot.

EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS

It wasn’t long, however, before Dr. Evers found an issue that almost every district is familiar with: large numbers of programs going unused. Instead of understanding their data and responding with action, the district relied on multiple programs the team didn’t use to their full capacity. “We were program heavy. We had a lot of different programs and SchoolStatus wasn’t being used for what it was intended to be used for at the time.” Districts everywhere can relate to the data room at Pass Christian when Dr. Evers joined the team. “We were treating our data as more of a gallery wall. We had all these data rooms—you would walk in and there would be stuff all over the walls. In some instances when I first got here, some of the schools had relics of what used to be a data room, but it is now a storage room. Stuff was on the wall that we never took down,” Evers explains. “So I felt like our data became more of an art gallery. We would walk in and look at it and go ‘hmm’ but we were not actually leaving the data room and going out and saying ‘this is the action we need to take as a result of it’.”



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BACK TO BASICS

Dr. Evers began stripping down the overabundance of programs and got back to some familiar basics in K-12 data analytics: spreadsheets. “What we started doing in the district was moving our own data around,” she explains. “One of the things I think that I really hold a belief in is that people need to understand how to work their own data.” Dr. Evers knew that unless her team acknowledged and understood their student data, they would never be able to fully utilize tools for analysis.

“We put a lot of human labor into looking at our data and analyzing our data,” she explains. “Really getting people to own their data and understand their data a little bit differently.” Dr. Evers pushed her team to dig into assessment scores and benchmarks. “We had excel sheets that would tell us what our predicted accountability score would be, and our grade. We were even using them up until last year,” she adds. “It was doing what we needed - but of course it was all labor-intensive.” Typically with even the best of spreadsheets, getting disparate data points to talk to one another is difficult- and not everyone knows how to use formulas correctly. It was a big ask of her team. “Even to the extent that our interventionist had a series of excel documents that they used to help us with our early warning system,” discloses Evers.

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THE DIFFERENCE IS DATA

Over time, data competence grew within the district but it came alongside spreadsheet burden and the district began to seek out less manual data solutions. One solution the district already had for assessments was built into an online instructional tool. “It did have a pretty robust data analytics system,” Dr. Evers explains, “but for that program only.” The system does not integrate with other products to pull data into the system leaving the district to search for meaningful ways to integrate data.

Dr. Evers did her due diligence in making a data analytics choice for her district that included calling around to other high performing districts in the state. **As it turned out, they all use SchoolStatus.** “Listening to those superintendents talk about how impactful SchoolStatus has been in their school district inspired us to say let’s go back to someone we know who is proven in our state,” she explains. “You don’t often get that with companies—you have to kind of take what they have sometimes and try to make it meet your needs. But I feel like SchoolStatus is trying specifically to meet the needs of leaders and teachers in the state, and that’s important to us.”

“SchoolStatus has all of these things pulled together—we can look at our attendance, our discipline, we don’t have to build that. Everything is already done for us,” she explains. SchoolStatus integrates with all the data sources a school district is already collecting. From state assessments to benchmarks, LMS and SIS. By being data agnostic, SchoolStatus is able to offer tools for analysis that answer questions concerning disparate data points - unlike solutions such as iReady.

“Everything that is important to school leaders. Everything that we look at, and we want to know more about, even things that our school board wants to know about, it’s all right here!” she laughs. “I don’t have to go and create something off to the side. Everything is pulled together right here, and it saves us so much time!”

MAKING DATA ACTIONABLE

The automatic, integrated data inside of SchoolStatus has enabled Dr. Evers to build stronger relationships with stakeholders by making information accessible and actionable. “It’s more actionable for us because of the student cards.” The student card in SchoolStatus is where the collected data is disaggregated for each student and has tools for calling, texting, and emailing guardians. “The parents and teachers can look at all aspects of what is going on with a child right there. We can pull in from all our other data packages and be able to see everything that’s happening with a child from their grades to their behavior to their attendance. When we are meeting with parents we can just pull the student’s data up,” Evers explains. Data transparency is managed by scope in SchoolStatus. Each member of the district is able to access and view only the data that is necessary for them. The company upholds strict FERPA regulations this way while still making data as transparent and accessible as possible. “We can look at their summative data and we can also look at their iReady data without having to go to multiple packages. We can do a single point login.”

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Dr. Evers appreciates seeing the big picture. “One of the things I love about SchoolStatus is I get a realistic picture of what our attendance looks like on a day-to-day basis,” she demonstrates. “I use it to look at attendance trends to know things like why our attendance is not at or above our goal of 95%.” From there, Evers starts looking for solutions. “I can start understanding that maybe I need to talk to the school nurses and ask if we have a problem out in the schools.”

Diving deeper into her data, Evers continues her investigation by creating customized groupings based on parameters in district data and mapping them geospatially. Her lists update automatically when a student reaches certain criteria or, alternately, drops out of said criteria. “I ask ‘What are we looking like with discipline? Where are we having issues? What part of our district are our discipline referrals coming from?’ No stone is left unturned at Pass Christian School District. “We can see if we need to have a targeted approach. Maybe we need to push into the neighborhood and do some events. Maybe I need to attend church in that neighborhood and ask the pastor and the church family to help us with issues that we might be having.”

Spotting trends and needs isn't just about finding the problem students either. Dr. Evers intends to connect and support every student in her district. "That feature also tells me where my children who have zero office referrals come from." Evers takes cues from what is working already within the community for potential solutions in other areas. "What is going on?" she asks, demonstrating her process, "Is this community doing things differently with their children? Do they have community events? What's the student outreach in that particular community versus one who may have struggles?"

UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES WITH COVID-19

Parent communication has always been important; now, it's critical. During the unexpected school shutdown associated with COVID-19, schools all over the country shifted abruptly to remote learning within just a few days. Teachers, in an overwhelming display of determination, went into overdrive and began modifying their lessons, working closely with frazzled parents, and offering some security and stability during an otherwise anxiety-filled time. At Pass Christian Public Schools, they achieved their family outreach with SchoolStatus.

"With regards to COVID-19, this has been a godsend to us," declares Evers. "It has been a platform to communicate with our parents in a time where we have to physically distance ourselves from our children and our parents. And that is just the opposite of what we do in our school district!" Like other successful school districts, Pass Christian Public Schools prides itself on a strong relationship with the community. "Our relationships with our families and the partnership we have with our families are what make us great. To potentially have lost that ability to partner with our parents would have been a real thing for us if we didn't have this tool."

Pass Christian Public Schools serves as a shining example of the support educators have offered families during this difficult time period, "Letting parents know that we are in partnership with them and we are going to continue providing a Pirate [the Pass Christian school district mascot] education to our students, we're just going to do it from home, and this is how." Dr. Evers' calm and determined leadership style is an asset to her district. "We were able to use SchoolStatus to touch and communicate with all of our parents. I'm not sure teachers would have been willing to call from their personal cell phones, but this made a way for them."

Metrics within SchoolStatus allow administrators to see how frequently communication is taking place with parents. "In just one week, we went from less than 100 text messages and communications, because we were piloting, to this week we've had 16,000 points of communication with parents. We've gone from 0-100 pretty quickly." Not only can Dr. Evers see how frequently communication is happening, all conversations are recorded for professionalism and compliance. More importantly, there's no parent app required.

"What would have been a heavy lift for us became so much lighter for our teachers. They were able to reach out to 100% of our parents this week and that was our ultimate goal, letting parents know we are here and we are with you."

"It was a bridge for us from the school to the home that we just wouldn't have had if we didn't have SchoolStatus," says Dr. Evers. "So, in a time of trouble, it was that bridge over troubled water."

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ABOUT PASS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Pass Christian Public Schools has a history of leading the way in excellence for the state. The district earned the highest academic performance level rating in the state – “A” District for the 2018-19 school year and has in its history earned the state’s number one spot five consecutive years. Pass Christian Public School District is located in Pass Christian, MS. It has 2,026 students in grades K-12 with a student-teacher ratio of 14 to 1.

ABOUT SCHOOLSTATUS

SchoolStatus is the only data analytics platform turning student insights into parent conversations. Through powerful reporting tools, automatic integrations, and customizable data points, educators easily identify students most in need of engagement. Then using the communication tools built right into the platform, instantly connect with guardians through calls, texts, or e-mails to reach families where they are. We focus on the data, so educators can focus on education. Contact us at schoolstatus.com, like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @schoolstatusapp.



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