FROM 'D' TO 'B'

SCOTT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT IMPLEMENTED SCHOOLSTATUS TO INTEGRATE ALL OF THEIR DATA SILOS.

Coming out of a state department takeover in 2014, Mississippi's Scott County School District was focused on improvement but lacked the tools to achieve it.

"A lot of things had been ignored, and we saw a need to really know our data," says Stephanie Cotnam, Scott County's instructional trainer. "We knew we couldn't grow and get better without it." Unfortunately, the information that teachers and administrators in the 2,500-student district needed to help guide decisions and interventions, was all over the place. There were papers from the Department of Education over here, charts from the classroom over there, almost everything was in hard copy.

THE PROBLEM

If you wanted to see a student's attendance record, you had to pull out one binder," says Sharon Hoye, curriculum director for Scott County School District. "Benchmark testing? Another binder. Some of the information wasn't there, because it had lapsed over time. Everything was sort of scattered."

Cotnam, an 11-year veteran of the district, knew the wide-reaching value of good data. When she wondered about student trends in attendance or performance, she would create Excel spreadsheets using Renaissance and grade book information. But it was so labor-intensive and time-consuming that only those with an insatiable appetite for data would bother—which, she acknowledges, is not everyone.

"We wanted a district-wide change to live in our data. We wanted to let our data be the driving force behind our decision making. We can make all the decisions we want, but if they aren't based in solid information, you just have to cross your fingers and hope it makes an impact." Perhaps more sobering than any single statistic: In the 2014–15 school year, the district earned a D rating from the Mississippi Department of Education.

"Everything was sort of scattered."

THE SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS

Comprising eight schools and three attendance centers, the district got to work defining goals and areas to focus on. They wanted to improve their test scores, attendance, and reading scores; check their programs and initiatives for fidelity; and see where there was growth and where there was stagnation.

Hoye, who joined the district that year, learned about SchoolStatus while the district was exploring tools to help them meet these improvement goals. The district considered other education data management products, like Clever, but soon decided that SchoolStatus' features and support were unparalleled.

"When I first came in, I searched for other products," says Hoye. "But I could not find any product that could do all the things that SchoolStatus does."

Cotnam, who led much of the training efforts to implement SchoolStatus throughout Scott County, agrees. She saw the value of turning what seemed like endless data points without context into cohesive, accessible reports. When she learned about how easy SchoolStatus made it to build customized reports, emphasize parental engagement, identify trends and precisely target interventions, it was a no-brainer.

"What sold us was that SchoolStatus lets you take data, change it from a number to a name, and build relationships between teachers and parents as well as teachers and students."

IN ACTION

In 2014, a couple of Scott County schools were chosen to test SchoolStatus.

"After that first year, we realized that all the teachers in the district needed to be involved with this and checking SchoolStatus daily and weekly," says Cotnam.
Soon, with lead teachers forging the path ahead, living in their data became the new normal for Scott County.

With just a couple of clicks, SchoolStatus' clean and easy-to-navigate dashboard showed teachers the whole story of their students and their classrooms, from absences to infractions, and custom notes to contact information—saving them precious time and empowering them with data that was previously only available to administrators. Those administrators started carrying their iPads to meetings, knowing that the district's data would be up to date. They could make decisions and target interventions based on real-time information.

"We can look at our universal screeners, our remediation programs, our state and district benchmarks," Hoye says. "If I want to create a report for students who have missed so many days with a specific achievement level, or a proficiency level of 2, I can do that in one place. I can look for a correlation between the number of days missed and student achievement. It's all in one location."

SchoolStatus "spread like wildfire," as Cotnam notes—and the district embraced their newfound ability to make whip-smart decisions based on real-time data. "It's second nature to our teachers now," she says. "When our teachers can call a parent and say, 'Today, I just wanted to tell you that your son read his book and got 100 on his reading points,' it just stops them in their tracks. For a long time, parent contact was just about the negative things. Now we can say, 'This is what's going on with your child; this is what we see—can we create a partnership to make things better?' The outreach has changed because we have access to this real-time student data."

From that very first day to now, when there are bumps in the road, SchoolStatus' team of highly trained support staff are only a call or click away.

"We love the chat feature," Cotnam says. "And any time we've needed training, it's just been wonderful. The customer service is phenomenal."

To this day, Hoye has SchoolStatus' unparalleled support team on her speed dial. "If I can't run a report, I'll call and someone will have it back to me in a matter of two or three minutes," she says. "I know everybody by name." "Our attendance rate has gone up," Cotnam says. "Our reading levels have been on the rise. Our discipline has gotten better."

And maybe most impressive of all? "That D rating in the 2014–15 school year jumped to a B in 2015–16," Hoye says. "It was such a wonderful feeling." For Sharon Hoye and the rest of the teachers and staffers at Scott County, the district's growth extends beyond attendance numbers or reading competitions. SchoolStatus has changed the way she looks at what's possible in education.

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 with us at schoolstatus.com, like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @schoolstatusapp.

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