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Case Study

Lake County Regional Office of Education

Lake County Regional Safe School Background

The Regional Office of Education (ROE) is located in Lake County, IL and performs regulatory functions for the State Board of Education. The ROE offers technical support, professional development activities for teachers and administrators, and certifies 11,500 educators each year.

The organization is responsible for ensuring student safety and administers programs such as GED testing, drug abuse and truancy prevention programs, and alternative education via the Lake County Regional Safe School (RSS).



RSS helps disruptive students in grades 6-12 who have received multiple suspensions, are eligible for expulsion, or have been expelled from a Lake County school. RSS students are frequently dealing with serious issues such as domestic violence, poverty, and drug and alcohol abuse, that influence their behavior and may negatively impact their ability to succeed in the classroom.

Prior to the creation of the RSS, when students demonstrated dangerous behavior that could affect the safety of staff or other students, and they were removed from their home school, there were no other options to help with behavior, mental stability, and academic performance.

Managing Student Information - The Manual Way

Michael Munda is in his 11th year as Principal of RSS and has been a professional educator for 32 years. About four years ago, RSS was using a system of paper documents, spreadsheets and Microsoft Word files to track student information. The system worked but it was time and labor intensive to manage, and information was very segmented.

If a teacher wanted to view a student's attendance, she would open the attendance log, lookup the student, and then review the information. If she wanted to see the student's grades, she would switch to the grades section, and then lookup the same student again.

"Student records were siloed," noted Mr. Munda. "If we wanted to view drug screens, counseling, or academic requirements for an individual, it was tedious. There was also no way for different stakeholders, who might not be on our school's network, to access student data."

"What we wanted was a portfolio that would compile all the student's records and make them easily accessible to multiple people--students, parents, teachers, administrators, and even employees outside the school system," Mr. Munda commented.

Concerns About Implementing a New System

Prior to implementing a new Student Information System, Mr. Munda was concerned about vendors being able to meet their school's unique needs. They had existing resources and assets that would have to be converted, they couldn't just be replaced with something new. And the school serves fewer than 150 students.

"Many of the software applications we evaluated were geared for a standard K-12 program," Mr. Munda stated. "Our needs are different. For example, we track behavioral modification and social skills. It's a unique approach to monitoring student behavior that is based on goal sheets. We look at student progress by period, day, and week."

"We enter data points into a 'social skills' cumulative record. This lets our team review a student and see if he is progressing, staying the same, or falling behind. We needed a software solution that could pull data from different areas, and accurately calculate the metrics we utilize."

"We definitely wanted something more user-friendly that would eliminate the headaches we were suffering from," shared Mr. Munda. "And the price had to be affordable because we are a state-funded program operating on a limited budget."

Orbund Meets the Challenge

Orbund was able to show that it could customize its solution for RSS. The company worked closely with Mr. Munda and his staff to compile an easy-to-access student record containing--grades, attendance, tuition billing, academics, disciplinary notes, and more--that could be accessed by authorized users, remotely.

Six week reviews are a core part of the ongoing evaluations that RSS staff conduct. Prior to using Orbund, it was a cumbersome process for staff to gather different documents, copy and paste emails, and pull together the information needed to see a complete view of the student's activities.

Now staff access a "Six Weeks" tab in Orbund, they can see all the relevant information, and little time is spent preparing data.

Simplifying Referrals

When a school refers a student to RSS, the old process involved gathering paperwork--i.e. birth certificate, attendance records, grade reports, etc.--putting them in a package and mailing it.

Now, Orbund offers an online referral process where the referring school can upload documents (PDF, Microsoft Word, etc.) and attach them to a student's record. When a new referral is initiated, the principal is notified. When all the submission requirements have been fulfilled, the Principal is alerted again.

Parents and other parties like the system too. They previously weren't able to access student records. For example, when an outside administrator wanted to check and see if a student was in attendance on a given day, she had to call RSS and ask. Now, if a student's probation officer wants to monitor a student, he or she can login to the system and check anytime.

Summary

RSS has been using Orbund on a daily basis for four years. During that time, the company has added numerous custom reports and features. RSS will continue working with Orbund on expanding their system's capabilities to streamline its business processes.



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