HOW LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUND THE ONLINE ECOSYSTEM IT NEEDED FOR STUDENT DATA MANAGEMENT

THE CLIENT
Lincoln Public Schools, Nebraska, is a highly diverse K-12 district with 65 schools serving more than 41,000 students. When the district was faced with replacing its 30-year-old student information system, it was looking for a solution that could do more than just student information management. Lincoln needed all of the traditional elements of a SIS – including an electronic gradebook and parent/student portal – but wanted additional functionality tied into the same platform, such as special education management and assessment.

“To one degree or another,” says Lincoln’s CTO, Kirk Langer, “all of these elements are inextricably tied. Instead of thinking about how to build a wraparound solution from a number of separate systems, we wanted to partner with a company that understood all of the different components that need to come together.”

Lincoln’s ideal solution would have to meet some specific requirements. First, it would have to blend all of the key functionality the district wanted into one seamless platform. Second, it would have to be extensible by the district and retain district customizations with each upgrade. And third, the vendor had to be open to a “true partnership,” working with the district to ensure that the system would be able to meet the district’s needs as they changed over time.

Lincoln put out an RFP and evaluated vendors and solutions. “We looked at who we thought we could best work with,” Langer said. “We knew it was going to be our staff and instructors who were going to do the real work of transformation, but we had to give them the technology platform and vendor support that would enable them to do what they need to do.”

A vigorous evaluation process convinced district leadership that Synergy Education Platform was the only available solution—and Edupoint the only vendor—that could meet the district’s customization and partnership specifications.
A SEAMLESS SOLUTION
Synergy Education Platform is a fully-integrated, single-database solution that provides student information management, learning management, assessment, special education management, online registration, and parent and student portals. A variety of mobile apps are available to meet the needs of specific user roles, including administrators and teachers. Synergy centralizes student data and resources such as lesson plans, assessments, IEPs, and reports for access by authorized users, and provides a rich collaboration environment through which faculty and staff can engage in discussions, share information, and work through processes together, guided by district-defined workflows and notifications. This robust set of features and functionality met the requirements for the type of “SIS plus” that Lincoln was looking for.

EXTRAORDINARY EXTENSIBILITY
Lincoln’s high expectations for the customizability of its solution found a match in Edupoint’s Synergy Technology (ST) Development Toolkit, which provides districts with access to the ST framework and source code and empowers developers to make extensive customizations independently and have their customizations retained through upgrades. Customizations made by the district using the toolkit bypass both the cost of vendor-created customizations and the time constraints involved in scheduling such customizations. Basic customization capabilities such as adding user-defined fields, tabs, and screens, are included with Synergy as part of the core product.

One district customization widely used by Lincoln’s high schools is the ability to mass assign administrators to students. Linking students and administrators in Synergy has enabled teachers and staff to easily direct discipline referrals and questions to a student’s assigned administrator without having to look the information up. What’s more, the assigned administrator can now be selected and sorted on for reporting purposes, providing a new angle for use in analyzing student data. The customization has resulted in streamlined workflows and significant time savings.

TRUE PARTNERSHIP
Lincoln sought a partner that was not only dependable and responsive, but also had a vision for the direction that future development should take, with Analytics and Response to Intervention modules on the horizon. Edupoint conveyed the strong ethos guiding the company’s decision-making: continuous innovation, directed toward meeting the needs of client districts and focused on providing the highest value for day-to-day use. Taken together, the depth and breadth of the Synergy platform, its customizability, and Edupoint’s clear vision for the future assured Lincoln that it had found the partner vendor it was looking for.

True to expectation, Lincoln’s partner relationship with Edupoint has been strong from the start. “Implementing a student information system is a huge project,” says Special Education Supervisor Cindy Brunken, “and we brought special education and health – which were on separate systems – into Synergy at the same time. That all occurred within nine months. You never see that happen as successfully as it did for us.”

“We got a partner that we knew wasn’t just a one trick pony,” Langer adds. “We knew we could work with Edupoint to do a lot of different things.”