

State-sponsored Information System



What Is a State-sponsored Information System?



The State-sponsored Student Information System (SSIS) is a software as a service (SaaS) master contract negotiated by TEA to reduce price and improve functionality for participating district and charter schools. This premium, low-cost solution for maintaining student data includes assured vendor support for local needs and built-in disaster recovery. In the state of Texas, local education agencies (LEAs), school districts and charter schools, have the option of negotiating a master contract through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) with either Texas Computer Cooperative (TCC) or Skyward to reduce the cost of data management and storing as well as improving the functionality of transferring data from the PEIMS system.

SSIS CONTRACTS INCLUDE:

- **Competitive, not-to-exceed price** per student that benefits all sizes of districts and charter schools across the state
- **Functionality improvements on an ongoing basis**—New and updated features are provided at no extra cost as they become available
- **Disaster recovery locations** and hosting to protect your data in case of unforeseen disaster
- Participation in an advisory group to **provide user input on functionality**
- **Additional support** to help transition to the new Education Data Warehouse and TSDS PEIMS

SKIP THE RFP

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) completed an RFP process for a Student Information System in 2012. A master contract was created and ratified on behalf of districts. Districts may now contract with either of these vendors without going through the RFP process.

Purchase of a state-sponsored SIS is voluntary. If preferred, LEAs may continue to use a non-state-sponsored SIS to provide their Texas Education Data Standards (TEDS)-compliant PEIMS extracts.

SKYWARD SSIS CONTACT

Skyward offers a comprehensive state-sponsored student information system (SSIS) at a discounted price with benefits such as disaster recovery services, a five-year pricing guarantee and hosting.



SKYWARDS HISTORY OF SERVICE:

- More than 1,600 local education agencies (LEAs) in school districts and charter schools of all sizes around the globe
- Ten regional offices across the country, including Dallas and Austin
- 192 LEAs in Texas with more than 1 million students

NEW FOR SSIS SUBSCRIBERS

- New data center in Texas
- Enhanced functionality for tracking discipline, special programs, and health data
- Customizable registration screen
- Enhanced scheduling features for managing multiple tracks, groups, and calendars



District Interviews

Harleton ISD



TOP BENEFITS for HARLETON ISD

1. Efficiency
2. District Savings
3. Improved reporting
4. User-friendly
5. Smooth transition and support

ABOUT HARLETON ISD

Student Population: 730

Staff: 117

Campuses: 3

SSIS Product: Skyward

Harleton ISD has received the Texas state comptroller's Texas Honors Circle Award every year since its creation, commending school districts and charter schools for academic performance and financial efficiency.

In 2012, Harleton ISD implemented the Skyward student information system, in an effort to move to a more powerful system at an affordable cost. A rural school district in east Texas, Harleton was in need of a cost-efficient and time-saving method for keeping school records.

District staff met with teachers and principals at all campuses to identify what functionality would benefit each of their areas. This gave staff the opportunity to give their opinions and be more a part of the process before the district invested in a new technology. Harleton ISD evaluated many vendors and determined the Skyward SSIS contract provided the most features they were looking for without the added expense of other vendor options.

“Switching to Skyward was easy—with a decrease in paperwork and an increase in easily accessible information, our district is saving both time and money.”

Craig Coleman
superintendent, Harleton ISD

IMPLEMENTATION & SUPPORT

At Harleton ISD, a small group of both faculty and administrative staff was selected to attend hands-on instructional sessions to support the local implementation and ongoing support. This group then trained a select group of teachers. These teachers would serve as “technology liaisons” on campuses for any real-time questions and lead training during teacher in-service days.

“The learning sessions were a positive experience,” said Kevin Jones, technology coordinator at Harleton ISD. “The Skyward support team was friendly, service-oriented, knowledgeable and timely in their training.”

SAVING TIME MEANS BETTER FOCUS

One of the biggest concerns for Harleton ISD’s staff was time inefficiencies.

Previously data like class rank and GPA were kept on spreadsheets, needing additional manual time for updating. The outdated methods were simply not enough to keep up with the demands on teachers’ and administrators’ time. Skyward’s self-populating features for data mean less human error, a decrease in redundancy and overall increases efficiency for the district.

“With its easy-to-use functionality, teachers have instant access to student records and data,” said Kevin Jones, technology coordinator at Harleton ISD. “Less time tracking down data means more time teaching in the classroom.”

REAL-TIME STUDENT DATA

“One of the best benefits we’ve found using Skyward is the increase in better parent communication,” said Craig Coleman, superintendent Harleton ISD. The Parent Portal makes it possible for parents to set up alerts on student performance. Teachers are able to access all vital information on a student in one place to assess a problem area and quickly make improvements before falling behind. For both parents and teachers, this means real-time results.

“Teachers have to submit grades on time because parents are checking, so grades get to the gradebook faster making it easier to catch a student falling behind before they do,” said Kevin Jones, technology coordinator at Harleton ISD.





District Interviews

Crowley ISD



TOP BENEFITS for CROWLEY ISD

1. Superior data management
2. Disaster recovery
- 3. Significant time savings**
4. Increased functionality
5. Improved customer service

ABOUT CROWLEY ISD

Student Population: 15,100

Staff: 1,500

Campuses: 23

SSIS Product: Skyward

Crowley ISD recently underwent a major technology upgrade equipping all teachers with upgraded laptops and iPad minis for every 7th-12th grade student. The upgrade provides a greater level of education enrichment and enhancement to the current curriculum more cost effectively than traditional textbooks.

In 2013, Crowley ISD implemented the Skyward student information system in an effort to improve district data management. Crowley's main goal in implementing this system was to provide both faculty and students with the most up-to-date tools to improve district success and performance.

"We seek to put the best learning tools in the hands of the kids and faculty," said Jerry Allen, director of information at Crowley ISD. "We want to provide them with every resource so that they can be successful."

Crowley ISD began its evaluation process of student information systems three years ago. The SSIS master contract helped them during negotiations to replicate the model with Skyward that was mirrored in the contract. They selected Skyward due to its delivery of PEIMS reporting and pre-PEIMS analysis. PEIMS issues are now solved a month before the submit deadline, saving the district more than 200 man hours.

“Teachers are not necessarily technology people; they’re focused on educating our students. With Skyward, the easy-to-use functionality makes organizing student data easier, opening up time for communication with parents.”

Pat Clement
PEIMS coordinator, Crowley ISD

IMPLEMENTATION & SUPPORT

Crowley ISD used the “train-the-trainer” method. District principals identified four to five people from each campus to attend training sessions and bring the information back to the school. The staff found this to be an efficient process and noted that they have seen a decrease in support calls from the campuses.

“Skyward has a proven method of how to train,” said Jerry Criddle, lead on integration for SSIS. “Skyward assigns a consultant to work with you to set up training, share best practices on who should attend and give you guidance on how to manage data conversions. Skyward was very attentive to the specific needs of our district.”

KEY BENEFITS

OPEN PARENT COMMUNICATION

One of the greatest benefits has been the family access to information and modules. The district has received a lot of positive feedback from parents about the online registration process and about having the ability to set notifications on their children including grades, attendance, etc. Crowley ISD has seen a dramatic increase in parents opting to receive email notifications, from 12% to 84% in the first year of implementation. This has opened direct communication between teachers and parents.

DISASTER RECOVERY & HOSTING

For Crowley ISD, disaster recovery services were a priority. Prior to implementing Skyward, data was hosted locally on the district’s own servers, and anytime staff needed to look at their data, the vendor charged Crowley an additional fee. To make matters worse, several years ago, Crowley’s system was down for a week due to an ice storm. Now with Skyward, Crowley’s teachers and administrators are confident they will always have access to their student information system.



TEXAS COMPUTER COOPERATIVE (TCC) SSIS CONTRACT



TxEIS is the Texas Computer Cooperative's (TCC) student information system for K-12, newly enhanced as a state-sponsored information system (SSIS) and offered at a discounted price. The TxEIS solution is web-based and fully integrated and supports the operational and reporting requirements of Texas schools. The SSIS is hosted at a secure data center and supported by trained service technicians.



NEW FOR SSIS SUBSCRIBERS

- Enhanced functionality and new modules
- A closer partnership with TEA (Texas Education Agency), ensuring that the software is always compliant with the latest PEIMS data standards (TEDS) Texas Education Data Standards
- A significantly reduced price for most customers
- Easy conversion for existing TxEIS customers
- Optional software packages available to subscribers at reduced pricing

TxEIS is available as both a state-sponsored SIS and as a non-state-sponsored SIS. Purchase of a state-sponsored SIS is voluntary. If preferred, LEAs may continue to use a non-state-sponsored SIS to provide their TEDS-compliant PEIMS extracts.



District Interviews

Edgewood ISD



TOP BENEFITS for EDGEWOOD ISD

1. Time savings
2. Disaster recovery & offsite hosting
3. Data management
4. Increased functionality
5. Data security

ABOUT EDGEWOOD ISD

Student Population: 984

Staff: 165

Campuses: 4

SSIS Product: TxEIS

In 2012, Edgewood ISD implemented TxEIS in an effort to improve district data recording. The district's largest challenge is an especially lean staff saddled with multiple responsibilities and few technology staff members. The main reason for transition was to free up staff time from both business and administrative responsibilities. Edgewood ISD had previously been utilizing TCC's business product, and when the SSIS contract was announced, they opted to also add on the student information system product. The district was specifically drawn to the system's increased functionality and offsite hosting.

IMPLEMENTATION & SUPPORT

Edgewood ISD utilized the "train-the-trainer" method. The district identified its PEIMS Coordinator and Technology Director to attend the initial TxEIS trainings at Region 7. It then conducted training with all staff and teachers during in-service prior to the start of the school year.

The district was very happy with the level of service and support it received from TCC during its implementation of the TxEIS product. Edgewood continues to rely on Region 7 to guide it through updates and additional trainings.

We feel very confident in the security and quality of our student data. Thankfully we have never had an issue with data security, but now that our data is protected through TCC's online security we are more confident than ever."

Andy Baker
superintendent, Edgewood ISD

FUNCTIONALITY & ENHANCEMENTS

Prior to implementation of TxEIS, Edgewood ISD was manually tracking grades and discipline, producing a lot of paperwork and requiring additional man hours. Now with the SSIS, online grades and discipline reports are organized and updated daily, making it easier for staff to track students. Online grade and discipline tracking was an adjustment for many staff members at the district, but they were happy to change processes, as they are now able to benefit from accessing all student information in one place.

"We have seen a significant time savings in data management since switching to the SSIS," said Andy Baker. "We are able to spend less time and money on paperwork and backing up files, and more time with our students."

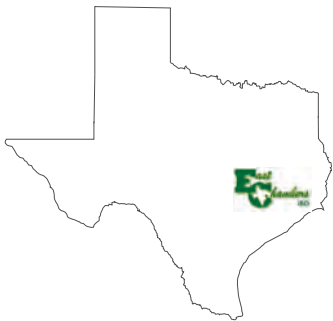
While the discipline, attendance and gradebook modules continue to be the most widely used, Edgewood ISD has also began using the new Special Education module and Parent Portal.

DISASTER RECOVERY AND SECURITY

With additional servers to host data, Edgewood ISD felt confident in its newly uninterrupted strategy for keeping track of records. Before implementation of TxEIS, Edgewood ISD hosted all its data locally on back-up servers. Now its data is backed up nightly to TCC's data centers. The district was able to repurpose the servers for other things.

In addition, after implementing TxEIS TCC, Edgewood ISD found that data is more protected. Access is only granted through the district's principals and superintendent.





District Interviews

East Chambers ISD



TOP BENEFITS *for* EAST CHAMBERS ISD

1. Increased functionality
2. Disaster recovery & hosting
3. PEIMS data management
4. Remote system access
5. Better parent communication

ABOUT EAST CHAMBERS ISD

Student Population: 1,400

Staff: 170

Campuses: 4

SSIS Product: TxEIS

East Chambers ISD is a Rural District with a larger transient population of students moving in and out of the district throughout the course of the school year—there is a need for easy to use technology to account for these move-ins throughout the year.

East Chambers ISD implemented TxEIS in an effort to improve district data recording and improve time spent during data management. The main reason East Chambers ISD transitioned to TxEIS TCC was that this was a proven, trusted system to accommodate its needs.

"As a customer for more than 25 years, we appreciated TCC's commitment to our projects, and we use the entire range of products they have available," said Scott Campbell, East Chambers ISD superintendent. "We have a high degree of confidence in TxEIS being timely, accurate and with no unforeseen additional costs."

The district was specifically drawn to the TxEIS product as it is a Texas-exclusive product and is a unique fit to their needs and the mandates of the state.

Hurricane season lasts six months in our area, so disaster recovery is critical for us. By using TxEIS, we store all of our data in Beaumont and San Antonio, which means we can avoid any interruption in payroll or loss of records.”

Scott Campbell
superintendent, East Chambers ISD

IMPLEMENTATION & SUPPORT

East Chambers ISD also used the “train-the-trainer” process to learn the system and distribute training to other faculty and staff. The district selected key employees including its PEIMS coordinator, registrars and counselors to be trained in Beaumont at its region center before the start of the school year in an effort to secure time for to educate faculty during in-service days.

“This year we had five new teachers on our elementary school campus who were unfamiliar with the system,” said Daniel Andrews, elementary principal at East Chambers ISD. “Veteran members of their grade-level teams were prepared to train them on the system and the new teachers learned the system in almost no time at all.”

The district appreciates the thorough training, including specific details on PEIMS and the data changes coming up for that school year. Registrars, principals and counselors at the district receive ongoing notifications from TCC on new updates. The registrars then meet to go over new enhancements and any additional training that might be necessary for the campuses.

FUNCTIONALITY & ENHANCEMENTS

East Chambers ISD has taken full advantage of all the enhancements that TxEIS has to offer to increase internal and parent collaboration. Registrars on all campuses use the comment tab to leave notes as to why they have made changes, allowing the PEIMS coordinator to double check the information and gain context.

“TxEIS’ electronic discipline module has enhanced our discipline process,” said Daniel Andrews, elementary principal at East Chambers ISD. “When a referral is issued, this is updated automatically to the Parent Portal and I am sent an email with the context from the teacher so issues can be handled in a timely manner. Overall, we are more efficiently able to identify and track bullying issues.”

The district relies on the Parent Portal to maintain proper communication so there are no surprises. Information is kept up to date by teachers and staff in as real-time as possible.





Key Functional Enhancements

TCC TxEIS:

- Graduation Plans
- Test Score Reporting
- Rubrics
- Standards Based Grading
- Discipline Referrals
- Parent Portal
- Office of Civil Rights Report
- Health Reports
- Special Education
- Special Program Reporting

SKYWARD:

- Career Technology
- Special Program Reporting
- Scheduling
- Registration
- Data Security
- Parent Portal
- Attendance
- Discipline
- Health Reports
- Student Demographics

BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Mind the Learning Curve: Because not all people are “tech-savvy,” identify the most pertinent topics for instruction. These include recording grades and attendance, and discipline records as well as finance and budget.

Discovery Method: After offering a hands-on overview of the new system, encourage teachers and staff to explore the software to discover specific needs and ask questions as they arose.

Learn From Your Peers: Take the time to speak with other school districts and charters schools to find out what worked best for them.

DISASTER RECOVERY

Both Skyward and TxEIS TCC offers two disaster recovery locations in order to protect data in case of an unforeseen disaster. For example, if a school is hit by a natural disaster, records will not be lost, as they are housed elsewhere. This means that everything from grades to staff payroll information will be preserved and interruption will be avoided.

TCC TxEIS disaster recovery locations are in Fort Worth and San Antonio while Skyward houses data in Dallas and Mequon, Wisconsin.

DATA SECURITY AND PRIVACY

With the SSIS, data security and student privacy are paramount. Both Skyward and TCC protect student data and privacy by only granting access of data to those authorized by their district. All TSDS data centers comply with federal and state security regulations such as FERPA (which protects the privacy of student education records), HIPPA (which protects the privacy of individuals’ medical information) and the Texas Administrative Code.

Additionally, student privacy is always protected as no student-level data is made available to researchers or the public.



A major initiative by the Texas Education Agency, Texas Student Data System is a **new statewide system** that modernizes and improves the quality of data collection, management and reporting in Texas education.



For more information visit our website at www.texasstudentdatasystem.org