New 'PEIMS' no longer like herding cats

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Collecting data on students at Hays CISD recently got easier with the rollout of a new software program called TSDS – which stands for Texas Student Data System, a statewide system for collecting and reporting education data for publicly funded schools in Texas.

The need for a new system stemmed from Texas school districts and charter schools spending significant time and an estimated $323 million a year, statewide, to report data to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Complaints that the data was not timely or provided in a useful fashion surfaced regularly as well. In addition, under the old system, data rarely made it to the educators best positioned to improve student achievement.

Several Hays CISD campuses played the role of guinea pig this past school year, implementing the TSDS program to test it and report back to TEA, as well as the Hays CISD central administration.

Replacing and expanding on the existing legacy system, called the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), the new TSDS offers an easier way to collect and manage PEIMS data, which many teachers and administrators say is disjointed and clunky.

The new TSDS system aggregates data into what's called a dashboard, giving educators a more complete, and faster, view of a student's data.

Brenda Richmond, MIS (Management Information Systems) assistant director at Hays CISD, was instrumental in rolling out TSDS in the district as part of TEA's pilot study. She said the schools still collect PEIMS information, but now in new software.

"TSDS aggregates all the PEIMS data so the teacher gets the full picture of what's going on with that child," she said.

Richmond said one current software, Eduphoria, tracks student assessments, including those in CSCOPE, as well as any at the state or local level.

With TSDS, those scores are now also included on the dashboard profile for each student.

"It shows all tests, how each kid did on each one, which teacher, and that all ties in with demographics and discipline," she said.

It sounds a lot like disparate sources of data are now all in one spot. Richmond agreed.

"That's the beauty of it," she said. "It opens up for teachers the ability to see that student's information. In the past, they have never been able to have that access."

With TSDS, Richmond said a teacher gets a full picture of everything about a student, allowing th em to react and respond by addressing that student's specific issues.

What is the bottom line benefit of TSDS?

According to Richmond, there are two pieces to this equation.

"It's the PEIMS replacement for reporting – we've been using PEIMS for 25 years; it's antiquated, but the real benefit is for the teachers."

TEA officials say it saves schools time and money, while empowering educators with more valuable data.

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