CASE STUDY: AISD

AISD PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

- AISD engaged iSphere for project management expertise in the middle of a complex Student Information System (SIS) conversion project

- Throughout the project, iSphere:
  - Worked with nearly 150 people within the AISD to successfully implement new SIS system
  - Created a comprehensive 50-75 step conversion plan
  - Developed a system for non-stop scenario testing to minimize errors upon launch

- Met aggressive timeline for conversion and launched SIS error-free

''This was one of the most **complex yet invigorating** projects I have ever worked on. There was no time for 'I'm late with this' from anyone involved with the project. We had **precise time windows** that had to be met to make sure we met the final launch date. The **depth of experience** iSphere has in the Texas education system and in the technology arena made this partnership a **good fit**.''

- Dan Vogel, iSphere's lead project manager on the AISD SIS conversion project

iSphere Leads Austin Independent School District to Successful, Error-Free Student Information System Implementation

THE CLIENT

The Austin Independent School District is the fifth largest school district in Texas, and serves approximately 86,000 students at 124 schools. The district's student population has grown by six percent over the past five years and serves a diverse student population representing more than 94 languages.

THE CHALLENGE

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) embarked on a district-wide Student Information System (SIS) implementation project to replace their existing SIS software. As part of the transition, AISD went through a dual enrollment period where the newly selected SIS software ran parallel with their existing software for five-months prior to the launch to work out any glitches and ensure a smooth final conversion. In the midst of the project, AISD's internal project manager ended his employment with the district. AISD was in a difficult situation, not only because of the breadth and complexity of the project, but because of extreme time constraints. AISD's existing SIS vendor was eliminating the software immediately following a five-month transition period. Further compounding the situation was the fact that the SIS software was used to report student attendance numbers, which directly impacted the amount of state funding AISD receives. If the reporting was not accurate, AISD was at risk of losing critical funding.

THE SOLUTION

AISD contacted iSphere for their project management expertise. Beyond iSphere's solid reputation and tremendous IT industry knowledge was their previous exposure within the Texas education system and successful execution of AISD projects.

To execute the conversion from AISD's former SIS system to the new system, iSphere worked with nearly 150 people within the district and outside to get everyone on the same page, gain consensus, document agreed upon tasks and execute on all of the mini projects that made the whole. Specifically, iSphere:
- Reviewed project documentation and met with the SIS manager to ensure full understanding of immediate, weekly, first month and the first three months goals.

- Gathered input from the core conversion team, created a comprehensive conversion plan and gained group approval. The final plan consisted of 50-75 steps, none of which had room for failure.

- Continually gained consensus among the group by taking advantage of the pockets of expertise within the AISD technology department to influence this project, rather than managing in a silo capacity.

- Performed gap analyses on existing applications to determine areas that needed to be fine-tuned from the old system to run on the new.

- Created a system for non-stop scenario testing during the four month dual enrollment period, prior to going live with implementation.

- Ran final validations for two weeks prior to the "go-live" date when the AISD would start to take attendance into the system.

THE RESULTS

AISD started the 2010 school year with a new SIS that was fully converted and running error-free. iSphere met the aggressive deadline on a project that typically takes at least six months and accomplished it in four. As a result, AISD was able to generate accurate reporting and receive state funding right from the start.

Beyond helping AISD overcome all of its challenges with the SIS project, some additional accomplishments include:

- All eight external applications, which were unique to the respective departments within the school district, e.g., the food service department, now interfaced with the new SIS.

- All internal applications written for specific functions within the school district—such as discipline, instruction management and special education—were all mapped in the new system and functioning properly.

- Each query and report that end users were accustomed to using in their former system was defined and mapped to run in the new SIS, a process that typically takes six months but was successfully finished in three.

ABOUT iSphere

iSphere is a Texas-based IT services firm that partners with clients to provide the necessary resources to meet critical IT and business goals. Partnering with our clients, we always put performance excellence and client loyalty first.

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