SunGard K-12: DISTRICT SUCCESS SPECIALISTS

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Technology in education is literally technology as it relates to the future—the results are everything. In the U.S., many school districts are challenged with adapting new, evolving technologies to address the increasing demand of parents, teachers, and administrators while under the constraints of a shrinking budget. "Five years ago, not every household had the number of mobile devices that are now available regardless of the income level," explains Frankie Jackson, Chief Technology Officer, Cypress–Fairbanks Independent School District, the 3rd largest school district in Texas, with an enrollment exceeding 114,000. With the proliferation of laptops, tablets, and mobile devices throughout society, there comes an increased expectation and dependence to use them to access anything, including school information.

"SunGard drives student achievement, performance, and prepares them for the '21st century digital economy'"

Yet the K-12 sector has lagged behind almost every other industry, mostly due to budget constraints. Now, we are witnessing a peaked interest in technology that can deliver data, information, and insights which improves education, real time. But how can it do this? For starters, it's important to understand that the concept of big data is flawed. Because data serves as the backbone of student achievement, district operational efficiencies, and important benchmarking attributes, simply mining incredible amounts of data, placing that data in front of administrators, and expecting them to analyze it into meaningful courses of action is not a realistic outcome. As SunGard K-12's Vice President of Product Joel Hames writes, "gathering data for the

A Partner, Not a Vendor

The most common metric of passion and commitment is time, and SunGard K-12 has devoted a lot of it to the industry. Since 1969, the solutions provider has been on the frontlines, helping K-12 districts put their best foot forward. "I find that administrators really take value in SunGard K-12's approach as we're not in it for the short term, and in fact, for over 46 years, we're proud of our extremely high retention rate," comments Adam Eberle, Chief Commercial Officer, SunGard K-12. With such tremendous growth, the company is now in small, medium, and large districts across 44 states. They pride themselves on their mindset of forging long-term partnerships rather than short-term transactions.

But of course, being well-intentioned is only half of what this company is renowned for. The other half is focused on driving student achievement, performance, and preparing for what they call a '21st century digital economy.' Cypress- Fairbanks approved a $1.2 billion bond, $218 million of which was devoted to a technology refresh and $90 million to technology infrastructure. According to Frankie, the greatest challenge of that is demand. "The demand is so great that every district has to overhaul their network to support it. If we break down what the $90 million is for, we're putting an enterprise wireless solution in every one of our schools that would account for the capability of high school students to be able to bring three personal devices," explains Frankie.

This goes back to the accessibility of technology. Because of the increase in devices in every home, districts like Cypress- Fairbanks are providing network infrastructure, connectivity, and backbone across a 10 gig network that requires a complete overhaul to maintain bandwidth and connection. And with that advance, they need to have systems in place that work on mobile devices, for administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students. Solutions that support those new trends is where SunGardK-12 demonstrates their industry leading expertise. One great innovation SunGard rolled out was their family mobile app that allows parents to keep up with all facets of student life - consistently. "In real-time, the parents are made aware of absences, tardiness, scheduling anomalies, owed money for food services, grades (in school or out of school) and even bus

As SunGard K-12 introduces new solutions and processes that will make data integrated, impactful and useful, school districts will have a more holistic view of data that really matters; data that will contribute to successful accomplishments in post-secondary readiness, attendance, discipline, prior course history, and even extra-curricular activities.

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The future of K-12

So what's the future of the education sector? Aside from the obvious technology inferences like SunGard K-12's intention of targeting the data silo problem, it may very well be in their ambitious attitude. Frankie, who works in the 22nd largest school district in the nation, and managed the district-wide implementation of SunGard K-12's solutions across 86 campuses in just a week, recalled a story where a VP-level representative of SunGard K-12 flew from Pennsylvania to Texas to greet school administrators. While there, he listened and made note of their

sake of gathering data is just as bad as having the wrong data." The focus of these data gathering efforts, contends Hames, should be built around the initiatives of identifying and determining the problems that require resolution then collecting the type of data that will yield useful results.

These are only a few of the glaring challenges in a segment that is more than just another market sector —education is the growth of a nation. As a result, it takes more than an entrepreneur or a vendor to solve many of these issues. The group of people who work tirelessly to drive positive results need to hold a commitment that goes beyond money, and recognize that their responsibility is to an entire country rather than solely their own success. It's in looking for such a passionate innovator that we discuss SunGard K-12 and the ways that they're driving change in what's mostly been a stagnant industry.

transportation information," says Eberle. With SunGard technology, even administrators can carry out monitoring of student badges with their phones rather than being confined to an office. If needed, they can send videos to higher-level administration or the police department. While essentially modernizing the K-12 industry and driving the industry forward to reach equal footing with the private sector, SunGard K-12 is implementing advanced mobile, big data, and predictive analytics strategies that are quickly advancing the industry's technological competencies. As evidence, SunGard K-12 is currently working on a solution that will target one of the problems associated with data. Typically, data is siloed in various locations, and as a result, is disparate and lacks correlation qualities when it should be fully integrated with all data points to deliver holistic view of data and the important correlations.

recommendations implemented by the company's development team a short time later. This is just one example of how SunGard K-12's high engagement model allows them to actually listen, respond, and act on customers' requests.

SunGard K-12 will continue their efforts in technologically furthering the K-12 industry with their consultancy focus – a process that allows the company to work with a district, conducting business process reviews, and sharing recommendations, best practice protocols, and results-driven solutions with that district and countless others.

With this combined focus, SunGard K-12 will continue to make an impact on future generations. And why not? Their passion, commitment, and results-driven approach remain largely unmatched in the education sector.