★ # Pryor Public Schools, Oklahoma

District leverages integrated school solutions to reduce manual processes and increase internal controls

Challenge

Anyone familiar with the world of school business will tell you it can be complex, whether you're running payroll or adjusting to changes in state reporting. However, the challenges Director of Finance Jason Johnson and the staff at Pryor Public Schools were facing with their software can be explained rather simply: It just wasn't meeting the needs of a growing school district.

Due in large part to exponential growth in the city's industrial park, Pryor Public Schools has seen their general fund budget increase from approximately $16 million to $30 million in the last three years alone. Couple that with an accounting system that offered limited functionality and required a large amount of data entry, it's no surprise Johnson and his staff were experiencing frustrations.

"We're in a growing stage," Johnson explained. "The system we were using was not a full accounting system. It's not a bad system and the schools it's working well for — it's good for what they need. It was really designed for schools that don't have a lot of personnel, or don't have staff with much accounting or bookkeeping knowledge, so a lot of the system was data entry. We thought we needed to look for an accounting system with more capabilities."

Organization Profile

- Industry: Education

- Tyler Client Since: 2015

- Number of Employees: 400

- Student Enrollment: 2,750

- Location: Pryor, Oklahoma

- Tyler Products Used: Infinite Visions®, Tyler Content Manager™, Tyler SIS™

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Solution

And look they did, eventually settling on an integrated suite of school solutions from Tyler Technologies: Infinite Visions®, Tyler Content Manager™, and Tyler SIS™.

"When we started down the road [of looking for new software], our thoughts were, 'We're really frustrated with the system we have,'" Johnson said. "We took the time to set priorities and goals for what we hoped to accomplish. A couple of other vendors had similar capabilities, but for the pricing and what we wanted to do, Tyler was by far the best option for us."

Results

Today, the district's new software has alleviated many of their pain points, from data entry and reporting to system security and support. Previously, much of the district's dissatisfaction centered around data transparency and accuracy — issues that were apparent to the finance department's experienced staff.

"Where financial accounting was concerned, a very big part of the frustration laid in the inability to see the process rules utilized to perform various functions," Johnson said. "We would put data into the system and the results we would get back weren't what we were expecting or what we knew we should get."

The inability to trust their data also created an abundance of manual work for Business Manager Kristi Scalf.

"I would figure something out for payroll by hand and the number wouldn't match with our accounting system, and it was a struggle and a fight to figure out why," said Scalf, an employee of Pryor Public Schools for 28 years. "There was a lot in the background that was being run by the system, but we had no insight into what the program was doing. We were finding we were doing more and more things manually."

With Infinite Visions, Johnson said, the district has unprecedented insight into their financial information and the ability to be more transparent to their stakeholders through detailed reports. And, since they were integral in the configuration and implementation process, the days of not understanding how the software is running in the background are a thing of the past.

In addition, the integration between Tyler's solutions has provided more clearly defined workflows and increased security.

"The ability to assign roles and privileges with more granularity has greatly improved internal controls," Johnson said. "Even though everyone in our office is of utmost integrity, the separation of duties we have been able to implement is great and makes the auditing process easier and more transparent. And the option to use electronic approval processes has saved time and ensured timely approval."

So, how does their software compare to their previous vendor?

"The old system was pretty much data entry," Johnson said. "Tyler has completely changed the entire way we function, so in a lot of ways, it doesn't compare at all."

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