



SPARCC: MEETING OHIO'S LEARNING MEASUREMENT GOALS IN THE CLASSROOM USING PINNACLE PLUS

challenge

- Centrally manage standards-based grading, attendance, discipline, demographic and state testing data for 30 school districts.
- Connect new DaSL web-based student system and the state's curriculum and testing management systems.
- Provide real-time information to administrators, teachers, parents and students with a scalable solution that can grow and adapt to changing needs.

solution

Pinnacle Plus™ Assessment Management System from Excelsior Software with optional Internet, Attendance, Principal and Student Viewers that provide data access and communication in a centralized, open architecture, terminal server environment.

results

- Pinnacle System integrated with web-based DaSL student system and SchoolNet curriculum software.
- Classroom interface supports data-driven decision-making for teachers.
- Facilitates communication between teachers, parents, administrators and between SPARCC, the districts and the state.
- Reduced or eliminated inefficient tasks at the building level.
- Increased parent and student involvement.

The Stark/Portage Area Computer Consortium (SPARCC) in Northeast Ohio is helping its 30 member school districts support individual student learning by integrating Excelsior's Pinnacle System™ with the DaSL student information system, the Ohio State Department of Education Curriculum Standards, Ohio's online curriculum management system, local district benchmarks and indicators, and the state test reporting system.

SPARCC is one of 23 Data Acquisition Sites in the Ohio Educational Computer Network (OECN) providing online computerized services to 30 member (volunteer) public schools, the Stark and Portage Educational Service Centers and 25 chartered non-public schools. The OECN sites also serve as Designated Data Acquisition Sites (DDAS) to collect and aggregate Education Management Information System (EMIS) state test data for their regions.

These organizations initially provided financial software for payroll and budgetary services to schools in the 1980s. Today those services have expanded to include the student information system, scheduling and, most recently, data reporting pursuant to the *No Child Left Behind Act*. SPARCC, a non-profit educational consortium, provides support for the selection, acquisition, installation, maintenance, and integration of technology into the learning community as well as extensive professional development services underpin to support all of these services. Currently, the consortium is also beginning work with colleges to improve teacher preparation in the areas of managing data and utilizing data-driven decision-making tools.

MEETING OHIO'S LEARNING GOALS

The State of Ohio provides oversight in the acquisition and responsible use of school technology—with the explicit goal of facilitating measurable learning improvement through the state's SchoolNet Commission (OSNC). SchoolNet services focus on technical training, teacher professional development, procurement, product evaluation, servicing, maintenance, repair and disposal. To date, 1.8 million students and 95,000 teachers in 660 Ohio public and joint vocational school districts have benefited from the agency's funding. More than 92,000 classrooms are able to access the Internet, digital resources and data/voice/video networks. A key SchoolNet focus is that school districts select and use standards-aligned technology—in particular, software, multimedia materials, web content, online courses and other interactive content that is potentially tailored to each student's individual needs.

Within the SPARCC office, they recognize that technology can help meet the individual instructional needs of all students by supporting the measurement and reporting of student achievement data. Further, technology needs to be part of how teachers manage the curriculum and they have to be prepared to make decisions about assessment and curriculum on the basis of how their students are performing.

INTEGRATING CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION, ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND STANDARDS USING TECHNOLOGY

Ohio is also in the process of developing aggregated state data reports. SPARCC is helping to develop and integrate a suite of data systems that will enable local educators to meet stringent state and federal requirements and also align curriculum, instruction and technology in ways that meet the individualized learning needs of each student.

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— Mel Lioi, SPARCC Director

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— Brian Paisley, SPARCC

In 2000, SPARCC and two sister OECNs developed the Data for Student Learning (DaSL) web-based data analysis software program, which has been extended (based on educator input) to now support student administration, state reporting and scheduling functions. DaSL currently supports the ability to graph and analyze off-year testing results for Stanford-9, OOPT, ITBS, McGraw-Hill, Terra Nova and OPBA tests. DaSL will also soon allow districts to analyze proficiency test data at the individual test item level—a powerful tool for relating individual student test performance directly to what teachers are doing in the classroom.

For curriculum management, the SchoolNet Learning Management System enables all Ohio teachers to track the instructional progress of their classes, create dynamic lessons tied to standards, and search the Ohio Align database of approved lessons. For the collection of standards-based grades, attendance, discipline and other student classroom data, SPARCC needed a system that would not only provide all of those functions, but integrate with DaSL and SchoolNet. SPARCC also needed a system that was flexible enough to meet the individual reporting and communication needs of the member districts and the state. In other words, SPARCC needed a technology system that could tie DaSL and SchoolNet together while connecting with the classroom and EMIS. After evaluating its options, SPARCC selected Excelsior's

Pinnacle Plus™ Assessment Management System for its comprehensive feature set, open architecture SQL database environment, and the company's technical integration capabilities. SPARCC's school districts have a high concentration of Macintosh computers, so a true multi-platform capability was a requirement. "We like the potential of Pinnacle and its ability to integrate into the big picture of what we are doing," said Assistant Superintendent and SPARCC Director, Ms. Mel Lioi. "The Excelsior people have been true partners-and that's the part we like."

IMPLEMENTING THE PINNACLE PLUS SOLUTION

SPARCC's participating member districts are in varying stages of Pinnacle Plus implementation. Anthony Faulkner, Excelsior's mid-Ohio regional representative, is working closely with SPARCC to import the Ohio standards, benchmarks and performance indicator data into each participating district's Pinnacle Plus database. That data is then linked to specific classes-all that each individual teacher then has to do is begin entering standards-based assignments and grades for their students. As the assignment and grading data is entered, it becomes immediately available not only at both the school office and district levels for informal reporting and querying, but also for the generation of standards-based interim reports and report cards in each school's desired format. "Our districts are using Pinnacle Plus to assess students strengths and weaknesses in all four core content areas (Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies)," notes Mr. Brian Paisley, Student Services Liason at SPARCC. "This enables teachers to customize instruction to meet the needs of all students within their classroom."

For software training, SPARCC works in partnership with Excelsior, providing local support for network managers and teacher leaders. As each district implements the Pinnacle System, the network manager responsible for managing Pinnacle receives three days of training, while teacher leaders in each school are trained for one day. SPARCC also provides technical assistance, which, for example, enables districts to install Pinnacle remotely using the SPARCC computer lab. The SPARCC technical support group can respond in person very quickly when people have questions or problems. Both Paisley and Ms. Patience Moody, whose child's school uses the Pinnacle System, believe that the

consistent support that SPARCC receives from Faulkner and the Excelsior staff is essential to the development and progression of the Pinnacle Plus project meeting both local and state reporting needs. "The staff is responsive to any and all inquiries and issues within our consortium regarding the Pinnacle suite of applications."

"Using the Pinnacle Internet Viewer module enables students and parents to monitor not only the progress of grades by each assignment, attendance and discipline within a class. PIV also allows parents to know which areas of the state curriculum standards their child has been evaluated on and what their successes have been."

— Patience Moody, parent

Faulkner is also helping SPARCC link the Pinnacle Internet Viewer module to the DaSL reporting system in order to make detailed classroom-based information immediately available to parents. That information will include attendance, interim grades, assignment status, discipline and teacher notes for individual students. As a parent, Moody believes "Using the Pinnacle Internet Viewer module enables students and parents to monitor not only the progress of grades by each assignment, attendance and discipline within a class. The Excelsior PIV module also allows parents to know which areas of the state curriculum standards their child has been evaluated on and what their successes have been." SPARCC and their member districts feel that parent access to real-time student information will make a huge change in the way they communicate with teachers. Parents

will be able to e-mail the teachers immediately, which in turn will impact the need for quarterly and annual reporting. Because Pinnacle's real-time database makes classroom data automatically available to DaSL, teachers don't have to perform any redundant data entry work—they simply maintain their electronic gradebook, one component of the Pinnacle Plus System.

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION FOR MEASURING LEARNING IMPROVEMENT

Ohio views technology as an integral part of a comprehensive, standards-based educational solution that enables educators to support and measure learning improvement for every child. For SPARCC, Pinnacle Plus is the component of the overall

system that teachers use to input formative assessment and other important classroom-level data for each student. Importantly, Pinnacle Plus seamlessly integrates with the varied components of the information system so that the data can be readily accessed for reporting and evaluation by school administrators, parents and the other stakeholders in the educational process.

Pinnacle Plus will help participating SPARCC educators meet the demands of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

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— Mel Lioi, SPARCC

As a result, Pinnacle Plus will help participating SPARCC educators meet the demands of the *No Child Left Behind Act* by using timely, individual assessment feedback to target effective instruction for each child. "Having access to the right data at each educator's desktop is the key," asserts Lioi, "and Pinnacle is an invaluable component that will help teachers accomplish what they need to do."

Excelsior Software extends its deep appreciation to Mel Lioi, Patience Moody, Brian Paisley, the Stark/Portage Area Computer Consortium and its 30 member school districts for their invaluable assistance with this case study.

for more information

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