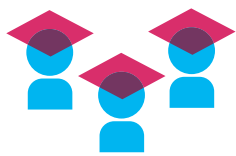**PowerSchool**

Improving Kindergarten Roundup and Enrollment for Working Families

REED-CUSTER COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT #255U, IL

Filling out a nearly inch thick packet of enrollment paperwork by hand isn't a task most kindergarten parents enjoy. Especially when they'd rather focus on more personal activities like meeting their students' new teacher and touring the classroom.

Administrators at Reed-Custer Community Unit School District (CUSD) 255U wanted a better way to run kindergarten roundup that didn't include manual paperwork. That process was time-consuming and inconvenient for parents in this rural Illinois district as well as staff who had to re-enter submitted information and interpret parents' handwriting. It was also costly for the district to print and mail packets.

1400 Students

1 High School
1 Middle School
1 Elementary School

AT A GLANCE

Challenges
- Wasted staff time and costs
- Time-consuming paper enrollment for parents
- Lack of personal connection during kindergarten roundup

Solution
- Unified Operations Enrollment
- Unified Operations PowerSchool SIS

Results
- Saved staff and parents time and costs
- Improved data collection and accuracy for state reporting
- Increased engagement opportunities for parents and staff during roundup

"Just mailing out forms alone was an entire day-long project for secretaries," says Luciana Kelaiditis, Reed-Custer's District Technology Personnel and PowerSchool Administrator.

The solution? The district ditched the paper-based process and implemented PowerSchool Enrollment, a fully online enrollment management system that works seamlessly with PowerSchool SIS, its student information system.

Now, with PowerSchool Enrollment, Kelaiditis says, "all that wasted time for secretaries is gone. Kindergarten enrollment and the roundup process are now smooth, paper-free, and convenient for parents and staff. Kindergarten roundup is now a time for parents and their students to get to know the classroom, nurses, and teachers."

Paper-Based Enrollment's Impact on Kindergarten Roundup

When using a paper-based enrollment system, the district started compiling their substantial registration packets throughout January and February. As a rural district with unincorporated areas, the district often didn't have correct addresses, so getting those packets to the right families was difficult.

"There's a lot of essential information we need. It created a sizeable envelope that cost more than a regular stamp to mail. With 1,400 kids, running all of that mail through a postage machine was a time-consuming task," says Kelaiditis.

Kindergarten roundup was a two-day process in mid-March at Reed-Custer Elementary School. Parents were invited in with their students and had a chance to "meet and greet" with staff.

Parents who hadn't received their enrollment packets in the mail would receive them at the roundup. They could either fill them out during the event, take them home to return, or mail them in later.

"Very few people stayed and filled out the forms at roundup," says Kelaiditis, "When you have three or four kids, including little ones, the event could be 'controlled chaos.' So parents would take the packets home, fill them out when they could, and then bring the information back for secretaries to re-enter."

> ❝ We had secretaries in various states of translating hieroglyphics essentially and hoping that the information was correct and in PowerSchool SIS so teachers and staff could use it. ❞

LUCIANA KELAIDITIS
District Technology Personnel and PowerSchool Administrator, Reed-Custer Community School District

The district needed information returned by a specific date to finalize bus routes for the start of school.

"Getting all of our students' information together and entered into PowerSchool SIS was incredibly time-consuming," says Kelaiditis. "Once we got the packet, we had to re-enter the information. We had secretaries in various states of translating hieroglyphics essentially and hoping that the information was correct and in PowerSchool SIS so teachers and staff could use it. Then we had to schedule the kids on their bus and then send postcards out to parents with their child's bus route. We literally had every secretary in every building working on registration. It was a herculean task and always came down to the wire."

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How Online Enrollment Improved Kindergarten Roundup

By switching to a secure, streamlined online enrollment system, Reed-Custer CUSD can offer parents a more relaxed kindergarten roundup process. Instead of filling out paperwork, attaching forms, and looking up information, parents can focus on meeting staff, touring classrooms, and helping their students prepare for their first school experience.

"We have parents who work full time and can't get to the school during the day, so having them fill out paperwork during the kindergarten roundup is nearly impossible. With online enrollment, parents can take as much or as little time as they need to," says Kelaiditis. "Kindergarten roundup is still an opportunity to come in person and see the classroom and meet teachers. But parents don't have to spend it stressfully filling out paperwork."

Online enrollment has made parents more responsible for giving accurate information that's extremely helpful for the student's academic career. The system also allows secretaries to see where parents are in the process and send reminders to finish or send in additional information if necessary.

It's also a chance to introduce parents to the PowerSchool software system, where they can create a parent portal account to check in on their student's education throughout their time in the district.

"When you bring parents in for kindergarten roundup, that's usually their first time in your district," says Kelaiditis. "It's a great opportunity to get them used to PowerSchool Enrollment and PowerSchool SIS, where they can register students, see grades, pay class fees, and sign agreements to district policies. It's important for us to have everything easy to use in one place, so our parents don't have to do a hundred different things to get the information they need for their child."

District Adds New Online Enrollment Features Each Year

When the district started using PowerSchool Enrollment, it used the basic "simplified education version" to capture essential information and get parents used to a new system.

In the district's second year, Kelaiditis brought secretaries into the process to find out what worked, what didn't, and what they could do better. As a group, they realized the potential of the information they could capture during the required enrollment process. In that second year, they enhanced the process by making it mandatory to fill out sports forms to ensure they had all the necessary information before students could attend practice.

"That gave us a huge boom in registration and opened up a partnership with the athletics department because they could see the benefit."

Kelaiditis says the result of adding athletic forms was that "every single department started asking if they could include something for them in the enrollment process. They could see how easy it was to collect important information."

> " Because PowerSchool Enrollment is so flexible, you find yourself trying to 'one up' yourself each year by adding something new. "
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> District Technology Personnel and PowerSchool Administrator, Reed-Custer Community School District

Last year the district added medical needs information to the enrollment process and gave parents the ability to upload health records via JPG or PDF. This year they're integrating fee collection into the process.

"Because PowerSchool Enrollment is so flexible, you find yourself trying to 'one up' yourself each year by adding something new. The beauty of the product is you can tie specific fields in PowerSchool SIS to specific questions in PowerSchool Enrollment, which helps our secretaries in a huge way," Kelaiditis says.

Leveraging Online Enrollment for State Reporting

Reed-Custer uses PowerSchool Enrollment to capture accurate data that's proven instrumental for Illinois state reporting submissions, even at the kindergarten level. The district has added key fields, which they've made a requirement for parents, to capture state-required information. It's especially helpful in saving secretaries time because they don't have to chase down information or verify data accuracy.

PowerSchool Enrollment's polishing data feature ensures the district receives quality, uniform data that flows into the student information system from the start.

"It improves accuracy and speeds up the process," says Kelaiditis, who's responsible for all of the district's state compliance reporting. "The state of Illinois wants a lot of records up front, and a lot of that information I can collect right out of registration. I literally line up my Illinois compliance page in PowerSchool SIS with my registration page in PowerSchool Enrollment, and I go down the list to see which ones I have answered or not."

State-required information the district captures includes identifying racial and gender codes, poverty levels, students who qualify for special programs, languages spoken in the home, qualifiers for free or reduced lunches, and students who have a parent or guardian in the military.

"Just by adding those fields in the enrollment form, we can use that information when submitting state submissions needed for special funding," says Kelaiditis. "Instead of tracking that information down later, we can just put it into an enrollment field. Then when state reporting happens, we just have it. Working that state reporting piece in was really helpful for us, especially for kindergarten registration because the state asks for quite a bit of information."

Less Paperwork and Time, More Engagement for Parents and Staff

No longer do kindergartener parents at rural Reed-Custer Community School District #255 have to fill out a thick packet of paperwork during the roundup process. And secretaries don't have to re-enter information based on the wide variety of parents' handwriting.

Instead, parents now enjoy the convenience of enrolling their students from the comfort of home or work on their timeline. Secretaries benefit from accurate information that comes into the system. The district benefits from state-required information captured right away for state compliance reporting.

And families with incoming kindergarteners benefit from being able to focus on meeting their new teachers.

"I can't proselytize for online enrollment enough," says Kelaiditis. "It saves us time and parents time. Online enrollment should be something you just expect at this point."

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Switching to a modern, online K-12 enrollment system can increase cost savings, efficiency, reporting compliance, and more.

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