

40,000 Students Start School on Time Because of 90-Day PowerSchool SIS Implementation

HOW EPIC CHARTER SCHOOLS' PARTNERSHIP WITH POWERSCHOOL PROMISES A BRIGHT, SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



Getting through challenges is a daily activity for most schools and districts. But most don't have the monumental challenge of implementing a new student information system for 40,000 students in just a few months, which is what Oklahoma's Epic Charter Schools faced.

Epic Charter Schools profile



Students:
Over 40,000



Locations Across:
77 Counties



Teachers:
Over 1,300

The organization had been using a proprietary, in-house SIS for the past 10 years. The system's creators, however, were leaving the organization—and taking the SIS with them. To keep using it to serve K-12 students throughout Oklahoma's 77 counties, the charter school system would have had to pay a steep price—even higher than most SISs' market price.

AT A GLANCE



Challenges

- Losing access to a proprietary SIS with 90 days until back-to-school
- Lack of integrated system of edtech products
- Dependence on multiple spreadsheets to see whole-child data



Solution

- [PowerSchool Student Analytics](#)
- [PowerSchool Student Information Cloud](#)
- [PowerSchool Schoology Learning](#)
- [PowerSchool Performance Matters](#)



Results

- Successful implementation of multiple PowerSchool products on time
- Sustainable, scalable SIS that can serve them into the future regardless of any further administration changes
- Complete set of integrated products to save time, see the whole child, and identify students in need

Instead, Epic looked for a new SIS that met the following goals:

- It was flexible to meet their needs now and into the future
- It connected with additional products from the vendor to meet the needs of the whole child
- It could be implemented before school started in the fall

Their decision to end usage of their existing SIS was made in late April, with the new school year just a few months away.

Roger Kimball, Epic's Deputy Superintendent of Technology for the past eight years, knew he was facing a significant challenge. Implementing a student information system for an organization of Epic's size can take over a year. The decision would ultimately come down to choosing an SIS vendor that could confidently meet the aggressive timeline. Epic's team needed to select a vendor who would be a true partner and who could hit the ground running from day one.

The charter school system met with multiple SIS vendors to see which could meet all their needs and tight timeline.

Bart Banfield, Epic's Superintendent, recounts the stressful situation. "All other student information systems except one that we communicated with said our timeline was too aggressive. They said they couldn't do it because implementation is a 12- to 18-month transition.

"They said, 'We're not interested.'"

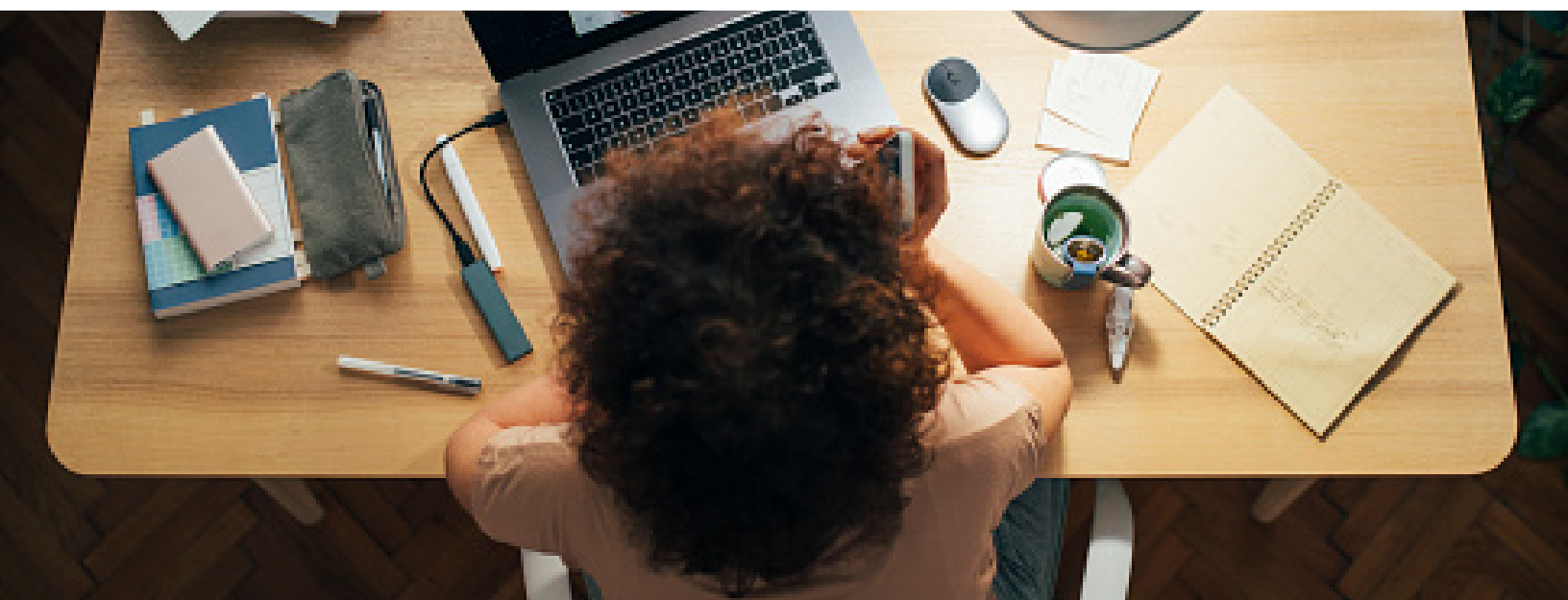
PowerSchool was interested, and willing to do whatever it took to implement the award-winning PowerSchool SIS to meet 40,000 Oklahoma students' needs.

"We were in a tough spot. We had nothing," Banfield says. "Everybody else we talked to told us, 'No.' PowerSchool was the only one that said, 'Yes.' PowerSchool was there for us in our time of need. Had we not had a student information system, we couldn't have had school. We couldn't have served tens of thousands of students here in Oklahoma who were counting on us."

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BART BANFIELD

SUPERINTENDENT, EPIC CHARTER SCHOOLS



Organized Effort Makes for a Smooth Implementation

Communication was vital for Epic's implementation process. PowerSchool's team of experienced implementation experts guided Epic Charter School staff throughout the entire experience, which included configuration specialists setting up the product to work for the schools' specific needs.

"Communication is key to everything, but it was very key to this that we be heard, that PowerSchool heard us loud and clear on what we needed, when we needed it, and being able to keep the timelines," says Kimball.

Epic staff worked with the PowerSchool team to set an implementation plan, timetable, and desired goals. A project manager ensured the deployment plan stayed on track to prepare PowerSchool SIS for the first day of school.

"PowerSchool made a trip to Oklahoma specifically for us," says Banfield. "We all sat down and had a face-to-face meeting to discuss the implementation. I was impressed with the attention to detail, consistent communication, and the ability to collaborate. PowerSchool was there with us during the day, sometimes in the evenings, and even on weekends. Finding that kind of customer service in our industry is tough, but PowerSchool just went above and beyond."

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Because of the teamwork, communication, and collaboration between PowerSchool and Epic Charter School staff, the implementation went smoothly, with the system up and operational by day one of classes.

"The fundamental question we started with was, 'Can we get school started?'" says Banfield. "We set out a 90-day timeline to do that. And guess what? We did it together. PowerSchool's leadership was just phenomenal. The attention we received from PowerSchool was tremendous."



Benefits of Innovative, Interoperable Edtech

By switching from a home-grown, proprietary student information system, Epic Charter Schools is ensuring it has current and future use of a sustainable, scalable SIS. PowerSchool SIS, part of the PowerSchool Student Information Cloud, has powered school operations since 1997 and is the most widely used student information system, serving over 45 million students in 15,000 schools and districts. Epic can take comfort in knowing they are well served into the future, regardless of any administration changes.

PowerSchool's Student Information Cloud gives K-12 leaders a secure, cloud-hosted solution for managing student information, enrollment, and special education. With seamless data sharing and easy navigation for staff, Epic Charter Schools can ensure accurate and complete data for compliance reporting and informed decision-making. Additionally, with PowerSchool's dedicated security team, their student data is always protected and accessible.

"Our proprietary student information system was like a Honda Accord, and PowerSchool is like a Ferrari. There's just so much more that can be done. PowerSchool's platform is incredibly powerful," Banfield says.

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In addition to the Student Information Cloud, Epic Charter School purchased PowerSchool solutions for classroom management and assessments. Previously, the organization had met some of these needs by add-ons to its SIS, supplemented by off-the-shelf vendor products. However, none of the data was centralized. According to Banfield, it was disaggregated and “kind of all over the place.”

“One of the unique aspects of the PowerSchool platform,” he says, “is that all of these products are under one umbrella. When we find something that works, like PowerSchool SIS, we're agile enough to be able to move with speed. Our goal was to identify solutions that were already under the PowerSchool umbrella and to be able to utilize those to create a more streamlined experience for our staff and our families.”

According to Banfield, one of the three main focuses of the organization is innovation, and by implementing interoperable products to address multiple needs, it's setting itself and students up for future success.

Epic is already seeing the benefits of interoperable products that connect, share data, and provide a seamless user experience. They've created enhanced online and blended learning environments with robust curriculum. They now can build out formative assessments for gauging mastery of Oklahoma academic standards, thereby allowing staff to quickly measure whether students need to be retaught or not. They can track important learning metrics so our teachers can provide real-time interventions when necessary, and helps administrators track where and how students are progressing.

Saving 1,300 Teachers 10-20 Hours Weekly

Epic Charter Schools saves its 1,300 teachers 10 to 20 hours of busy work every week by syncing PowerSchool Schoology Learning to the PowerTeacher Pro Gradebook in PowerSchool SIS. The organization's curriculum design team built out a preK-8th grade curriculum aligned to Oklahoma Academic Standards. That curriculum is loaded into Schoology Learning, where students complete coursework, and grades automatically migrate into PowerTeacher Pro.

“PowerTeacher Pro is saving our teachers time in manual grading, which is low-level work. You don’t want your certified teachers doing that kind of work. You want them focused on teaching and measuring the students. That is a time multiplier, which means now our certified teachers can give our students and families more time and attention,” Banfield says.

Using Online Forms and Data to Identify Students in Need

PowerSchool Ecollect Forms, an online form builder that is part of the Student Information Cloud, allows schools to capture customizable information and sync with PowerSchool SIS, helping teachers and staff treat the whole child. Like many schools, Epic is focusing on taking a whole-child approach to providing wraparound services, which includes statewide assistance for homeless students.

Epic uses Ecollect Forms to learn more about students, families, and their living conditions. “Once we have that information in the PowerSchool system,” Banfield says, “we’re using resources and our partnerships with DHS and other agencies to provide support like housing, clothing, water, electricity, or whatever the need is. We’re able to document that and, because we’re housing it in the PowerSchool system, we can track it and provide analytics to discern if we’re making progress towards those students that we’ve identified as homeless.”

Epic also uses PowerSchool Student Analytics and Performance Matters to help identify students in need. Before, they used an inefficient manual process with spreadsheets, but now they can access data from multiple products and display critical information in one convenient dashboard to get a complete picture of students.

“Our goal is to provide real-time intervention for students who need it,” Banfield says. “We’re already able to track historically a year’s worth of benchmarks and state testing and then compare everything. We can break it down by cohorts to see who’s at risk, ELL, homeless, or Title I students. We can filter, which is incredibly helpful for our leadership and administrative team that are trying to help students.”

Looking Toward a Successful Future

Epic Charter Schools looks forward to a long-term, stable partnership with PowerSchool—a company that’s dedicated to being there to help meet student, staff, and school needs. Epic is also already planning on adding more PowerSchool products to its system to enhance integration and abilities.

“We’re ‘all in’ on PowerSchool and look forward to building out more products to full capacity. We value PowerSchool’s commitment to innovation and want to be a part of this ongoing journey because, at the end of the day, the students are the ones who are going to win.”

PowerSchool Student Information Cloud.

Explore our comprehensive cloud-hosted solution for student information, enrollment management, data management, and special education.

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