



March, 2005



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## Implementing School Management Software

### Four Keys For Success

Many schools today own or intend to purchase some form of school management software (SMS). A well designed and implemented package can often streamline: reducing much of the work associated with running a school or district. Software features can include modules like admissions, attendance, grading, discipline, nursing and even transportation.

However, as the saying goes, "buyer beware". The reality for many schools who have bought into a well designed SMS sales presentation can be quite different. Unanticipated costs associated with poor deployment, compressed timelines, inadequately trained staff and unresponsive tech support can all lead to a high-priced SMS failure.

**Here are four key areas that you, as a Superintendent or Business Administrator, should pay special attention to in order to avoid SMS implementation failures:**

#### 1. Software Selection

The selection of a package that can accomplish a majority of your required needs is critical. By reducing the need to customize an SMS package, you can greatly decrease the time and cost associated with its implementation. An easy and effective way to learn more about software selection is to speak with other superintendents and administrators who are using SMS: this can reveal improperly designed software, poor technical support and expensive upgrades.

#### 2. Timeline Estimates

Be overly cautious about your timeline estimates or problems will quickly arise. For example, you do not want to promise your staff the ability to grade papers from home and be unable to offer that option due to a delay in an implementation or training schedule. Take your best timeline estimates and double them, this will allow for any unexpected delays.

#### 3. Deployment

When addressing the installation of your SMS package, work on a module-by-module basis. For instance, if you decide to start with the attendance module, implement only this portion of the SMS package. Once the module has been correctly implemented and your staff thoroughly trained in its use, only then should you

move on to the next module. This approach prevents the possibility of overwhelming your audience and provides adequate time to insure that you maximize each module's capabilities.

#### 4. Training

Training should occur in small groups and last no longer than four hours a day. Gear your training toward specific user groups -- not the general features of the package: a teacher may have no need to understand how to generate a system report; and a business administrator may not need to deal with an attendance module. By planning your training schedule correctly, you avoid wasting valuable time educating a group on software features they will never use.

By paying close attention to these four key areas of SMS implementation, you will help to insure that your school's SMS project is a success. Keep in mind that whichever package you do eventually select, it is a marriage between your school and the software vendor.

Enjoy the start of Spring...

All the best,



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