TIP SHEET

Essential Qualities of Modern K-12 School Software Solutions

Managing a K-12 school is complicated. There are many stakeholders to consider, including students, parents, teachers, staff, and a Board of Trustees. There are time-consuming tasks that must be accomplished and human concerns like student health, employee retention, and financial stability. Modern schools rely on educational software systems to help manage day-to-day operations, record data, and facilitate communications to balance these concerns.

Two of the most critical software solutions K-12 schools rely upon are their Learning Management and Student Information Systems (LMS and SIS). An LMS is an online portal through which teachers, coaches, and advisors communicate assignments, announcements, schedules, and other vital information to students and their families. An SIS collects data from the LMS to provide in-depth reporting and be a record-keeping platform for student grades, attendance, transcripts, and other administrative information. Each system serves a distinct purpose, yet fully integrated solutions can save time, money, and effort. In contrast, disconnected systems can silo data, creating frustration and increasing the workload on faculty and staff who already have a lot on their plate. School software should be designed to alleviate mundane tasks and free up teachers and staff to do their human-centric and strategic work.

There are five essential qualities of modern K-12 school software solutions:

① Seamless Integration

Data should flow seamlessly between your Learning Management and Student Information Systems. This will save teachers and staff time by avoiding duplicate entries and ensuring accurate and consistent grade and attendance data. These systems should also integrate with your enrollment, tuition, financial aid, and accounting software. A fully integrated solution ensures you have centralized reporting and a single source of truth for school data.

② Single Sign-On

Students and their families should be able to view course information, assignments, grades, calendars, and extracurricular activities all in one place and make tuition payments securely with that same login. Faculty and staff should each have their own unique login that enables them to see all the information they need to complete their jobs efficiently. They should be able to toggle between the LMS and SIS without logging into separate screens. Some of this access

may be "view only," allowing them to see data without the credentials to edit it. School leaders should have a complete view of any individual student's academic experience and the ability to view the overall trends of the entire student body.

3 Intuitive and Mobile-Friendly Interface

Some teachers and staff will most likely embrace technology, while others may be more reluctant or less skilled. That is also true of the students and families using your systems. Your software should be intuitive for basic users and offer features that advanced users will appreciate. It should work just as well on smartphones as on desktops and be responsive to each device and browser. A system that is complicated to operate will make training more challenging and discourage users. An intuitive system will reduce training time and increase adoption.

4 Robust Messaging

A modern school software system should support robust messaging for teachers, students, and parents. Teachers should be able to enter custom notes for every child, and parents should be able to set up alerts by text or email to see updates as they are entered. If parents have a question, they should be able to text through the portal using their smartphones and know that the teacher will get the message. The portal should also send automated alerts when a permission slip or other form is required, it's time to re-enroll, or a tuition payment is due. Having all communication in one place alleviates the back-and-forth nature of email, eliminates the problem of messages landing in a spam filter, and keeps all information in a secure, readily accessible location.

5 Data Security

Your data needs to be secure. Ensure that any software you choose for your school has standards for enhanced password protection, automated deactivation of inactive user accounts, and multi-factor authentication. Ask potential software vendors about their compliance credentials and data security protocols, how your data will be encrypted, and their disaster recovery plans.

Modern school software solutions should expedite tasks, reduce paperwork, and facilitate communication between the school, teachers, students, and families. It should be seamless, intuitive, and secure while making information easily accessible to everyone.

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