

# Best Practices Managing Change at Klein Independent School District

The number of children filling Klein Independent School District's (ISD) classrooms has soared by about 20 percent over the last five years, ranking it as one of the fastest growing school districts in Texas. About 40,000 children from diverse backgrounds attend one of 37 Klein ISD campuses. Yet despite the rapid growth and increasingly demanding state education standards, students at this Houston-area school district are excelling academically.

To better track the growing number of Klein ISD students, each with unique academic needs, district officials sought a powerful, user-friendly student management system that would meet the stringent reporting standards for student and district information, imposed by the Texas Education Agency. These standards, known as PEIMS (public education information management system), provide the critical data by which public school districts receive their funding.

Based on its rate of growth, Klein ISD needed a system that could store vast amounts of information, accurately report to PEIMS, and automatically search large volumes of data to find patterns and gaps in student performance. Specifically, the district office sought to move from its unwieldy Unix-based system, which required that all student data be reported by each school, then manually aggregated for district-wide reports.

"Klein was looking for data warehousing and mining capabilities that we felt SIF (schools interoperability framework) compliant applications would give us," said Vicki James, Klein ISD executive director for student information systems. "We were also looking for an application that had a relational database, was centralized, and offered reporting at the district level as well as the school level."

The school district selected Pearson's Chancery SMS, and Klein school employees have been using the web-based student information system (SIS) since 2003. The system has helped Klein's 3,000 school officials better prepare for the increasing demands of running a diverse school district.

While Klein officials report that users are now able to do their jobs better and faster, the phased adoption of a new SIS was not without its challenges, particularly given the numerous categories and vast quantities of student information the system handles. Registration, family demographics, course scheduling, attendance, grading and transcripts, discipline, and special academic programs are all critical data managed by James' office through the SIS.

A former teacher and school administrator, James offers districts five suggestions to facilitate the change from their legacy student information system to Chancery SMS.

## QUICK FACTS

### Student Diversity

- 15% African American
- 49% White
- 27% Hispanic
- 8% Asian/Pacific Islander

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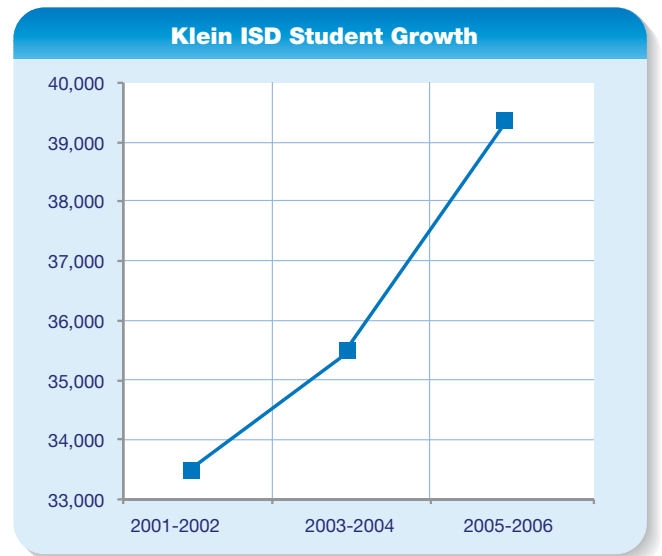
“Change is often difficult for people.”

Vicki James  
Klein ISD Executive Director  
Klein Independent  
School District

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## 1. Consider long-term needs

What schools need today may not be what they'll need next year. This is a fact for any school district, and it is especially true for Klein ISD. Over the past few years, families flocked to the Klein school district, dramatically increasing the number of children to be tracked. To provide the best education for every child in the district, Klein ISD increased its number of employees and schools. Chancery SMS's scalability allowed for additional student data and an increased number of users without requiring that the district purchase additional hardware and software. With Chancery SMS cTools, Klein was able to extend its tracking capabilities without any complicated or costly programming requirements. “We've added screens to track data we weren't able to track before,” James said.



## 2. Make sure the technology plays well with others

Since school districts are in the business of educating children, an effective student information system is a top priority. But information about finances, personnel, transportation, food services and other organizational operations is also critical to efficiently manage a school district. “We've always been a school district that makes data-driven decisions,” James said. In preparation for the system's implementation, Pearson employees worked closely with Klein officials to extensively study the district's operational and educational needs and existing technology, including its various other information systems. Prior to implementing Chancery SMS, Klein officials manually retrieved and delivered a snapshot of student data several times a month, to various district departments. Chancery SMS' open architecture will allow various district software systems to connect through a central server and automatically share real-time information. Also, as a web-based application, integration and upgrading of other district software programs with Chancery SMS is much simpler than having to physically install the applications on every user's computer.

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Vicki James  
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### 3. Set clear expectations

Moving to a new student information systems is not as easy as downloading a consumer program on a personal computer. “Many people expect to simply plug in a program and have everything work perfectly from day one,” James said. A customizable solution like Chancery SMS is purposely designed to allow districts to enhance student tracking capabilities based on the unique needs of each school district. Chancery SMS provides the technology and services to improve school districts’ monitoring and reporting of student achievement. Student information systems have evolved dramatically in the past few years, but each district has unique data needs that can be met in a committed partnership. “...The system offers districts customized tracking of district instructional initiatives...” James said. But this customization is a process that requires thorough analysis of each school district’s needs and consultation with prospective users.

### 4. Prepare for the natural discomfort of the unknown

It is expected that today’s public school environment embrace change and transformation. Educational reform and innovation are intended to improve students’ school experiences, but this popular notion is not effortlessly practiced. “Change is often difficult for people,” James admitted. There’s a natural hesitation in embracing any new routine, and the adoption of a new student information system is no different. “We had just learned to maneuver the other (SIS) system and...wham! We moved to another system,” said Beverly Driskell, registrar at a Klein high school. Regardless of the prior system’s limitations, many users will be uncertain about adopting a new technology. Adequate training for users and effective communication before, during, and after deployment are fundamental to a successful implementation.

### 5. Communicate regularly

Talking through difficult situations works. “We initially received complaints from users, which we learned were due to their repeated attempts to take old processes and replicate them on the new system,” James said. Setting and managing expectations, taking time to train varying levels of technology users, and reinforcing new benefits and efficiencies will help school officials feel more comfortable, enabling them to more quickly adapt to the new SIS.

Chancery SMS is already playing a significant role in improving children’s education, while creating operational efficiencies for Klein school officials. “Some lead counselors are stating that rather than spending 5-6 months [working] on their master schedules, they are allowing the system to do the work for them,” James said.

Rebecca Long, a counselor at one Klein high school, now has much more time to focus on her students instead of administrative duties. “It used to be a nightmare to manually deal with [coordinating] 175 teachers’ schedules,” Long said. “With Chancery SMS, I actually enjoy a summer break now. It’s great!”

“Because it’s a web-based system, the ability to access Chancery SMS from home while sitting in an easy chair in pajamas, instead of having to drive into school also helps,” James joked.

Stories like these are much more common at Klein. “Chancery SMS is now embedded into everyday life,” James said. “Each year we’re changing our procedures and becoming more efficient.”

## About Pearson

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