



Two mothers in Monmouth Junction, NJ, a residential community between New York and Philadelphia, say Pearson's PowerSchool® can help parents give their children the support they need to succeed in school.

Anne Barringer believes her youngest daughter, Rebecca, might never have graduated from South Brunswick High School without her mother monitoring her work with PowerSchool and providing a loving nudge when necessary.

PowerSchool allows Ellen Birch to track her son Steven's homework assignments, intervening at the right moments to keep him on track to graduate.

"This was my best friend and his worst nightmare," Birch said, only partly joking.

PowerSchool, the leading and fastest-growing student information system (SIS) today, also provides real benefits for teachers and administrators in the South Brunswick Township School District. Teachers can easily input grades from school or home. Administrators can keep up with evolving state and federal reporting requirements with PowerSchool's intuitive report-building tools.

"It changed our whole culture," said Aaron Bryan, director of technology for South Brunswick.

In an area where many people commute to work at nearby Princeton and Rutgers universities, the potential for online parent access to PowerSchool is virtually unlimited: 99 percent of South Brunswick district parents have Internet access at home. The 9,100-student district with 10 schools began implementing PowerSchool in late 2002.

Challenge

Barringer said her daughter, Rebecca, loves learning and almost always completed her homework. However, when Barringer went to parent-teacher conferences, she often heard that Rebecca had failed to turn in her assignments.



"LEARNING WAS NOT THE ISSUE; BEING ORGANIZED WAS THE ISSUE...BUT IT CAME ACROSS AS BEING A POOR LEARNER."

Anne Barringer, parent to south Brunswick student Rebecca

During one such meeting, Barringer requested the teacher take her to Rebecca's locker.

"It was like a commercial where you open it, and it was jam-packed with paper," Barringer said. The completed homework was there—Rebecca has just forgotten to turn it in.

"Learning was not the issue; being organized was the issue," Barringer said. "But it came across as being a poor learner."

Birch received similar messages from most of Steven's teachers. Steven is engaged in class. He is very bright. He is one of their favorite students. But Steven often fails to turn in his written work. "He is very talented but is the typical, typical artist," Birch said. "He loves to read, loves to write, and writes beautifully—as long as it's not a homework assignment."

Solution

In early 2002, South Brunswick implemented PowerSchool, the fastest growing and most widely used student information system. To keep parents informed and involved in their child's education, South Brunswick implemented the parent portal, which is included with PowerSchool.

South Brunswick started with a parent and student pilot group, of which Birch and Barringer were members. The pilot helped the district understand how the parents and students would use the portal and prepared the district for complete implementation.

To help new families understand how to use the parent portal, South Brunswick sends letters to parents of new students in grades 6 through 12. The district's web page also answers frequently asked questions about PowerSchool and provides an email address and phone number for the help desk.

South Brunswick also uses ReportWorks, PowerSchool's custom report writer, and PowerTeacher™, PowerSchool's powerful gradebook. Both of these tools are included with PowerSchool and have helped save the district administrators and teachers time and money.

Benefits

Both parents said having the detailed, real-time information from PowerSchool completely changed the conversations they had with their children and with their children's teachers.

Birch remembered startling her son early in the PowerSchool pilot program by saying, "Good job on your test." Steven stopped what he was doing. "How do you know I had a test?" he asked.

Now, Birch said, "He knows that I know exactly what he's reading in school, exactly what he's doing." This knowledge has opened up opportunities for Birch to talk to Steven about what he is learning. She knew, for instance, that he was reading *A Streetcar Named Desire* by playwright Tennessee Williams, and when Birch asked



"HE KNOWS THAT I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE'S READING IN SCHOOL, EXACTLY WHAT HE'S DOING."

Ellen Birch, parent to South Brunswick student Steven

about it, Steven recounted the play's tragic ending. Birch is able to engage her son in a dialog about school, adding more learning opportunities for Steven that help drive improved school performance.

Steven, 17, is on track to graduate and go to community college before art school, and Rebecca, now 19, is doing well at college.

"If you're the type of parent who really believes you can help your child on her path, PowerSchool is a wonderful tool for you," Barringer said.

PowerSchool has also been a valuable tool for South Brunswick teachers, administrators, and technology staff.

Flexible System Saves Time on Reports

PowerSchool has slashed the amount of time staff members spend compiling information for state reports. A report that used to take eight hours to complete can be done in 30 minutes with PowerSchool. South Brunswick officials use ReportWorks, PowerSchool's custom report-building tool, to create disciplinary reports they are required to submit regularly to the state. Flexible data exchange among systems including PowerSchool, health,

student services, cafeteria, and busing, saves staff from entering the same information into multiple databases.

Opening Communication with Students and Parents

The PowerTeacher Gradebook, included with PowerSchool, has created more accountability for South Brunswick teachers, who went from inconsistent grading systems and irregular reporting to transparent, regular communication with students and parents.

“Using PowerSchool has had a very positive effect on teacher-student and teacher-parent communication,” said Corie Gaylord, a history teacher at South Brunswick High School. “It enables us to work together more effectively for the benefit of our students.”

Teachers update grades every two weeks through PowerSchool, which gives students time to make improvements, if necessary. “Before, students didn’t realize the immediate, and perhaps severe, impact that missed assignments would make on their grade,” Gaylord said.

South Brunswick continues to expand online grading to younger students and plans to issue online progress reports, cutting paper costs for the district.

Online Support with PowerSource

South Brunswick technology staff members also value PowerSource, PowerSchool’s community-focused website for support, services, downloads, and training. Users not only access information through PowerSource, but they can share tips and find solutions in the knowledge base of other users.

“The user group is very strong,” Bryan said.

South Brunswick officials have also contributed to the dialog, with Michael Moore, SIS administrator, delivering a recent presentation on customization for the user group. Bryan and Moore take what they learn from other

PowerSchool users to continue to strengthen the South Brunswick system to serve students and parents.

“I think it’s the best tool to come along,” Barringer said.

About Pearson

Pearson, the global leader in education and education technology, engages today’s digital natives with effective, personalized learning, while also providing dedicated professional development for their teachers. This commitment is demonstrated by Pearson’s investment in innovative print and digital education materials for pre-K through college; student information systems and learning management systems; teacher professional development; career certification programs; and testing and assessment products that set the standard for the industry. In addition to PowerSchool, the company’s respected brands include Scott Foresman, Prentice Hall, Addison Wesley, Benjamin Cummings, Stanford 10, SuccessNet, MyLabs, SuccessMaker, and many others. Pearson’s comprehensive offerings help inform targeted instruction and intervention so that success is in reach of every student at every level of education. Pearson’s commitment to education for all is supported by the global philanthropic initiatives of the Pearson Foundation. Pearson’s other primary businesses are the Financial Times Group and the Penguin Group.

