

K-12 Forms

The Last Mile in K-12 Digital Transformation



Digital transformation is not a one-time event, especially in education. It's more of a journey and no two journeys are the same. One of the primary challenges confronting districts today is the fragmented data-entry and associated paperwork that continues to pile on top of teachers, principals, parents and district staff despite all of the information systems used.

Indeed, the lack of an enterprise solution to support non-standard forms and workflows has forced educators to resort to binders, paper forms, fillable PDFs, Google Forms and traditional office tools like Word and Excel. District information systems like the SIS, ERP, HRMS, and LMS all have blind-spots in terms of the kind of data that can be collected and can feel bulky and hard to navigate from an end-user perspective.

We've accepted enterprise systems for handling most of our educational processes, why aren't we doing the same for all the peripheral data collection that occurs every day outside of these core systems?

Speaking with districts that have conquered this last mile of data collection and digital workflows, here are their top recommendations when evaluating a technology solution:



1. Thou Shall Not Conform - when selecting a data collection solution, make sure you're not stuck with the vendor's templates that were built to appeal to a larger audience and that forces you to change your process. Look for a solution that will wrap around your current process, not the other way around. This is critical for user adoption and future-proofing as regulators introduce new and different requirements for data collection and reporting.
2. Collaborate and Save Money - there is strength in numbers! Some vendors allow you to collaborate with the community and pool forms from other districts in one place so you can borrow and copy from your peers. Why reinvent the wheel if you don't have to?
3. Independence - flexibility to build your own forms with ease, no technical experience required. There are hundreds of "form builders" out there. Google Forms and Survey Monkey are lightweight tools suited for questionnaires but are not robust enough when data privacy is required and where there are many layers of roles and permissions.
4. Integration - if the data already exists in another system or better yet another form, there is absolutely no reason why those fields ought to be blank. Form to Form integration is a must-have feature that will save hours! Nothing is more frustrating and ripe for error than entering the same information in multiple places, multiple times.
5. Data Hostage - beware of systems that want to keep your data hostage. Ensure that every data element on a form can be exported and reported on.
6. Don't Pay Too Much - software vendors love their modules. It's an upsell opportunity and often used in negotiations to build the "value".

At the end of the day, you want a solution that is flexible yet robust. Each department needs to be able to handle its forms and workflows in its own way while relying on robust data privacy and integration. With the right solution, the last mile of your digital transformation is within grasp!