

Database Solution for Teacher Performance Support

Context

In my teaching career, I have worked in three different school districts and, although the environment differs, the daily administrative tasks of the teacher remain the same. Aside from recording attendance, teachers need to keep track of grades, standardized scores, phone calls to parents, Individualized Educational Plans, and disciplinary incidents. The first district in which I taught made the teacher accountable for tracking all of these assignments. Needless to say, many teachers made an occasional fopax in record keeping, which yeilded an unruly reponse from parents. Another district simplified all of these processes for teachers by utilizing a performance-support software called eSchoolPlus[®] Online, which is a product of Sungard Public Sector. Teachers log onto this online database in order to record and track the progress of students in each course they are teaching. Aside from the aforementioned attributes, Eschool also allows teachers access to student schedules, student picture IDs, and parent contact information.

How Performance Support Improves the Performance

While eSchoolPlus[®] offers many programs for tracking data, the package that my district purchased focuses solely on maintaining comprehensive records of students. Without this performance support, teachers had to calculate each student's grade in a paper grade book. In a high school setting, this is an overwhelming tasking. Teachers with seven classes of 25 students would spend hours a week calculating, averaging, and entering grades. The eSchoolPlus[®] system improves the complexity of this task by doing the math for the teacher. Aside from properly calculating grades, it also provides teachers with a visual tally of student attendance and uses icons next to student names to indicate who has an I.E.P. This one-stop organizer gives its more time to dedicate to lesson-planning.

Characteristics That Make This an Appropriate Use

One feature that makes this software appropriate is its security. Each teacher has his own password protected log-in, which is vital considering that I.E.P. reports are legal documents that not open to public view. To obtain information about a particular student, the user needs to double click on the students name. Here, a teacher can obtain the student's current, pertinent data, which is helpful if a teacher wishes to establish strong parental involvement.

Impact of Visual Elements and Interface on Performance

As earlier previously mentioned, aspects of eSchoolPlus's instinctive interface make the software easy to use. Upon logging in, the user sees tabs labeled with the classes he is teaching. To view a class, click on it. Each class will open in its own window. From left to right, the categories are: student name, student ID number, assignment 1, assignment 2, assignment 3..., cumulative grade. Entering grades is intuitive, for the user need only click on the assignment tab and fill out a template for the assignment. The template is one that the user can modify, but the it includes categories that are necessary for tracking grades, like due dates, point values, and extra credit. Newly made assignments will not load unless the user enters in dates, which forces the teacher to stay organized.

Simplicity of Implementation

The eSchoolPlus performance software would be simple to implement within any district because the purpose of it and need for it are evident. It does not attempt to incorporate a variety of unrelated data, which could potentially frustrate users. It is limited to student data—not lesson plans, staff email, substitute systems, etc. In fact, the New Teacher Induction program for the district offers optional, 15 minute eSchoolPlus training sessions. Most newly hired faculty learn how to use the software by following a one-page instruction sheet that emailed to them when they are issued their faculty computer.

FIGURES

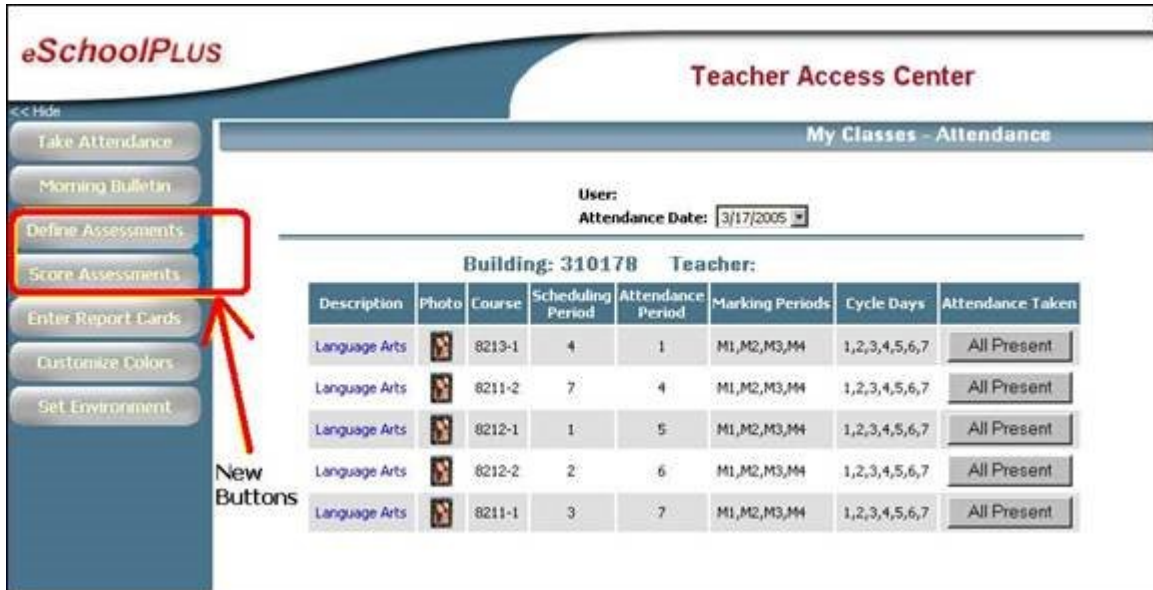


Figure 1: Initial Screen for Teacher Courses



Figure 2: Student Data Screen