

The Data Management Initiative of the Sudbury Public Schools March 2011

The Sudbury Public Schools has had as an ongoing objective to improve instruction and administrative functions through efficient and effective technologies. To this end, in the school year 2009-10, the district formed a Data Management Advisory Team consisting of staff in various end-user roles to provide broad direction for improvement of our information systems. In part, this initiative has been a reaction to the lack of viability of the Education Data Warehouse (EDW) of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in meeting the immediate needs of school districts. A number of separate data systems, addressing various isolated needs of teachers and administrators, are currently used in SPS to provide information in many areas such as MCAS results, literacy assessments, grade reporting, behavior, and even discipline. There is a need to link this data together, through unique student ID numbers, so that information can be accessed more simply by teachers and that relationships among specific data points can be considered in ways that yield increased understanding about student performance. The Advisory Team has been engaged with an education technology consultant organization, TECedge, to help establish a vision for our work in gathering and using data; and, in the identification of core needs relative to information access.

As the work in this area progresses, a smaller Data Specialist Team (DST) of district technology staff, school and district leaders, and an administrative assistant has been established that meets regularly with representatives of TECedge and IMG, the district's student information system (SIS) provider. The district uses a student information system known as I-Pass as its SIS. I-Pass has wide use among school districts in this region. IMG has expressed a strong interest in working with our district in meeting its needs for improved data gathering, analysis, and reporting.

An initial priority has been to identify training needs of Sudbury's instructional, management, and support staff in using I-Pass as it is currently available within the district. This would remedy problems of the district being unaware of some useful features and capabilities of I-Pass. Another endeavor of the DST is to consider strategies for generating the kinds of reports that teachers and building leaders have expressed are most important to the district at this time. For example, reports on formative assessments in literacy and math are major data sources for impacting instruction as they identify specific skills in individual students for which interventions are needed. Once data gathering and reporting systems are designed, developed, and become more available to teachers, professional development for their effective use becomes a major undertaking.

As the State brings the EDW into full functionality, the work of the SPS staff in addressing its immediate needs is expected to dovetail with what might be provided at low/no cost. Redundancies will be avoided; but, importantly, gaps will be filled. Strong communication among constituency groups will be an asset to the district's work with information systems.