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Success story

PCS and GISD

Industry

• Education

Solution

• OpenText™ LiquidOffice



Garland Independent School District tracks free curbside meals during COVID-19 crisis

Second largest public school district in Dallas County ensures safety, efficiency for delivery of 36,000 meals per day with PCS Feed the Kids application powered by OpenText Intelligent Forms Automation with LiquidOffice

Results



Reduced paper handling, simplified meal counts with free digital form



Expedited turnaround for meal reimbursement from USDA



Improved accuracy, availability of data for continued nutritional necessity

"OpenText LiquidOffice is extremely robust and very responsive. We're able to support more than 80 districts... with just a couple people. If we were to bring on another 500 districts, I have no doubt that it would work just fine."

Dusty Swan

Director of the FORMS Division
PCS Revenue Control Systems



Ongoing community need

In early 2020, COVID-19 changed education. Along with other school districts across the United States, Garland ISD headquartered in Garland, Texas, replaced in-school instruction with at-home e-learning for close to 56,000 students. Attending 72 schools covering almost 100 square miles, more than half of the students within Garland ISD are economically disadvantaged. Many of the youth qualify for free or reduced price meals from programs by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Every year, the USDA reimburses schools across the nation for billions of meals served to students. During normal school operation, Garland ISD Student Nutrition Services uses PCS Revenue Control Systems to supply reports for the National School Lunch Program. When school is out of session, they track meal counts via paper sheets for the Summer Food Service Program. Meal counts serve as a quantity guide for ordering food and supplies and affect the speed with which funds are reimbursed to the school districts.

Continued nutrition services

To meet the needs of its students and communities, Garland ISD continued delivery of essential services, including meals, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The district's Student Nutrition Services prepared close to 36,000 meals per day to be distributed from 33 schools in Garland, Rowlett and Sachse, locations designated through guidelines from the Texas Department of Agriculture. Children up to age 18 received a free breakfast and lunch for every weekday from trained personnel, regardless of whether they attended schools in the area.

When the USDA approved distribution of meals under the summer program in response to the coronavirus emergency, Garland ISD—along

with other school districts across the nation—defaulted to its existing procedure for summer reporting. The manual method posed challenges: ***"As soon as you start going outside of schools to serve meals, you don't have the point-of-sale machines or any of the utilities to collect this information,"*** explained Dusty Swan, Director of the FORMS Division for PCS Revenue Control Systems. ***"School districts normally use paper tally sheets for recording summer program meals and touching paper has become a problem."***

Furthermore, social distancing and protective health measures presented limitations for distribution with a reduced workforce. Jason Hickman, technology coordinator with Garland ISD Student Nutrition Services: ***"It's been a drastic change for everybody. Now, we have less people at the school, handling everything curbside and we've reduced distribution to three days a week."*** As a result, each distribution covers multiple meals, such as a hot lunch for the day of pickup as well as a breakfast and a cold lunch for the following day along with instructions for how to store and reheat items. Staff members needed a simple and safe way to track data required by the USDA.

Curbside counting

To guarantee accurate tracking for federal funding, Garland ISD turned to technology. Within days of transitioning to curbside meal delivery, the District began tracking and reporting data with an easy-to-use application offered by PCS, built with OpenText LiquidOffice. Entering meal counts into a convenient digital form, on a phone, tablet or PC, district personnel avoid handling paper and reduce the turnaround to receive reimbursement for meals. The solution supports continuation of a vital and comforting service for students during an uncertain time.

During the crisis, PCS developed and distributed the Feed the Kids application to districts free of charge. Though PCS also reduced its

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Jason Hickman
Technology Coordinator
Garland ISD Student Nutrition Services



workforce in response to the pandemic, Dusty and Becki Swan, Director of Sales for PCS, formed a lean husband-and-wife team to build the site quickly using a familiar solution: OpenText LiquidOffice for omnichannel data collection and forms automation. ***“LiquidOffice has a unique design utility with drag-and-drop,”*** noted Dusty. ***“We pulled it together with absolutely no coding of any kind and went live in three days.”*** Though her expertise focuses on point-of-sale solutions, Becki said the forms automation solution proved intuitive: ***“I learned how to build a LiquidOffice form in five minutes,”*** she noted.

PCS donated the Feed the Kids application to ‘school lunch heroes’ across the United States through emails, social media and other methods, said Becki. ***“The sign-up process is quick and easy for districts to use. We have a workflow built in... once approved, it automatically sends an email with all instructions on how to use the forms and the site.”*** Though the solutions provider conducted training webinars, many district staff members mastered the system without training. ***“The process was very easy,”*** Hickman concurred. ***“I set it up as a test on Sunday and let everybody take a look at it... by that Tuesday, they were all on board and we started running with it right away.”*** He noted Garland ISD’s business coordinator was able to enter counts from previous days, since the process improved tracking and stores centralized data.

Expedited reimbursement, accurate ordering

Within its first weeks of use, Garland ISD served close to 300,000 meals tracked by the program. More than 80 other school districts also deployed the system. While some prefer to enter counts via mobile devices, others track numbers on paper, then enter the data into forms from a computer. At Garland ISD, Hickman added desktop icons for all 33 sites to access the application easily.

“Meal counts would take a lot longer if we were doing everything by paper without a centralized location,” Hickman said. ***“You would have someone in the field drive to each location to collect papers and add up the meal counts.”*** Instead, using a digital process, users can log in from anywhere to view data, increasing productivity and reducing the need for face-to-face interaction in accordance with health and safety measures. With immediate access to total meal counts, managers, supervisors and directors continue meeting needs. Hickman: ***“Knowing how many meals we’re serving definitely helps all of the other cogs in the process do what they have to do as far as daily ordering, approving, shipping and receiving to get the food to the schools.”***

The digital form with built-in calculation also supports informed decisions with improved accuracy, according to Becki. Rather than manually entering numbers into spreadsheets to be combined with other reports, the data stays in one place. ***“Any time you remove the human element, it reduces the amount of errors that can occur. With this being in a centralized location, it doesn’t get touched as often; therefore, there is less room for errors.”***

Working together, schools and providers rely on OpenText to maintain essential services for families during a challenging time. Even with limited resources, PCS leveraged OpenText technology to support dozens of school districts across the nation, with confidence the system can handle many more. ***“LiquidOffice is extremely robust and very responsive,”*** Dusty said. ***“We’re able to support more than 80 districts, handling approvals, support—everything—with just a couple people ... if we were to bring on another 500 districts, I have no doubt that it would work just fine.”***



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