K-12 District-Wide Records Management

Supporting Successful Student Pathways

parchment®

Contents:

Introduction

Today, K-12 school and district leaders share a growing focus on the idea of learner pathways, the progression students make as they move between secondary schools, participate in dual enrollment programs and go on to higher education or directly into the workforce. While the path to a college degree was once fairly static, educators now know it can be far from a straight line.

According to Changing Student Pathways, a collection of related articles and essays, learners now "swirl" from institution to institution and back again. In other words, they take a less-than traditional path, involving one—or some—of the following:

- Taking courses at multiple schools, on-campus or online.

- Transferring from a two-year community college to a four-year university or vice versa.

- Participating in experiential and competency-based learning.

- Following other alternative pathways of their creation.

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's Tracking Transfers report found that approximately **40% of first-time freshmen start in community colleges and 31.5% transfer-out at some point.** Yet, there are hurdles facing students who don't follow traditional courses. A 2017 report from the Government Accountability Office found that students transferring between public schools on average lost 37% of their credits. When students' academic records are not handled properly, they risk losing not only credits, but also valuable time.

This proves that it's imperative that administrators are able to advocate for transfer students or those taking other alternative pathways.

Are students looking to continue their education after serving in the military? Are they interested in transferring apprenticeship records to future employers?

Many school and district leaders are looking for ways to remove barriers in how they manage records to help more students complete degree programs.

Here's a closer look:

Learner Pathways:

A Measure of District Success

Learner pathways include activities at both counselor and district level, and how the two come together when students graduate and their records move from school to district and beyond. As a district leader, you are a steward in supporting these changing student pathways because the documents are a measure of success for a district.

These pathways, along with curriculum, learning, state standards, and all teaching and learning activities of your district contribute to college and career readiness for your students.

So, how do you support students who leave your district so they can continue their educational career without interruption? How do you matriculate student transfers into the district in a timely and efficient way so that you can place them into courses and get them going?

While it takes program innovation and guidance to support students as they pursue their next college and career step, one critical obstacle they will face is gaining access to their records.

Record management is often a high impact, but overlooked function. Simply put, student pathways are about turning education into opportunities, and student records are vital to that personal progression as well as district success.

Records Collection:

A Critical Element for
Lifelong Learners

For many people, learning has become a lifelong endeavor. Over time, students collect a multitude of official academic records that represent their achievements—beginning with their K-12 experience and continuing throughout their lifetime. Today, trends like dual enrollment in high school and college, high academic attrition rates, and a gig economy where independent workers and temporary positions are common can make keeping track of these documents challenging.

Learners deserve the ability to build a credential profile, a centralized place where they can collect, manage and securely share their hard-earned documents. Accessing records should be quick, easy and efficient, opening up the next opportunity for education or employment with each exchange.

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that 27% of adults hold a non-degree credential with the majority of adults reporting that their most important work credential was very useful for getting a job (82 percent), keeping a job (80 percent), remaining marketable to employers or clients (81 percent), and improving work skills (66 percent).

The need to access and share credentials doesn't just stop with the high school to college exchange. They are collected across a lifetime.

A majority of adults report that their most important work credential was very useful for:

82%
Getting a Job

80%
Keeping a Job

81%
Remaining marketable to employers or clients

66%
Improving work skills

The Opportunity:

Unified District Records Management

Unifying school and district records management has become a critical need, as credentials are at the center of everything learners do. A great deal of student-record management is currently manual, paper-intensive and fragmented across schools and districts. School counseling teams fulfill transcript requests for college admissions. At the district level, staff support transcripts, graduation verifications and other record types for alumni.

Many, if not most, districts lack a platform that is capable of unifying these experiences for administrators, students and third parties.

By integrating both counselor and district-based record management, school districts can then support the enrollment and employment journey of their current students and alumni with a comprehensive, secure and modern experience.

District Records Management:

What is it?

Records management is a key activity and category within your district's operations (at some scale), and is defined as:

- **Every Requestor:** Current students, alumni, third parties or admin initiated

- **Every Request:** Paper (fulfilled locally onsite or outsourced) or digital

- **Every Record:** Transcripts, Enrollment Verification, Graduation Verification, Immunization Records, Birth Certificates, Special Education Records

- **Every Destination:** Secure delivery in network via Parchment Receive or to any email or mail destination worldwide

Successful records management is about a broad set of documents, not just transcripts but also enrollment verifications, diplomas, graduation verifications, immunization reports, letters of recommendation, IEPs and immigration documents, for example.

These documents are relevant to your current students as well as alumni and third-party organizations like colleges, employers, and background-check companies.

For learners, successful records management takes the guesswork out of where to order, ensuring their requests are sent to the right destination within the district and streamlines the admissions or employment process.

For administrators, it creates a central access point for the district office, allowing visibility into individual high school accounts.

And (last but not least) records management can save money and make money for schools and districts.

District Records Management:

A Solution for Existing Challenges

If your district is like most, you have a multitude of challenges around records management:

- Slow, paper-based manual process.

- Decentralized order taking and fulfillment.

- Tight budgets and an inability to collect surcharges.

- No visibility to document status after sending.

- Confusing student-to-alumni record transition.

- Legacy record access and storage.

- Security and privacy concerns.

- Juggling multiple ed tech vendors.

- Desire to improve operational efficiency and student service.

With a district-wide records management platform, your district can:

- Deliver secure records in the format the destination prefers, resulting in faster processing, fewer errors and quicker admissions decisions, and access to financial aid.

- Foster student success, removing barriers to college or employment.

- Provide an easy-to-use solution for all schools in the district that helps reduce resistance to technology and change.

- Create an additional source of revenue from a branded ordering portal.

- Increase operational efficiency and improve the student experience.

District Records Management:

The Business Case

While successful records management takes the friction out of learner pathways, it also:

- Increases operational efficiency.

- Improves customer service.

- Saves time and money.

- Generates auxiliary revenue from student and alumni record requests.

Records management is not a one-sided activity. The destinations learners select for their records are also part of their pathway. Is a student taking on an apprenticeship and looking to leverage this record for future employment?

It's your district's responsibility to send records internally and externally to other districts, while employers, college admissions offices and background-check companies are also on the receiving end. In addition, most records receivers do not want to deal with paper documents and would prefer this information in a digital format.

Then there's that storage closet you have that's full of paper alumni records. It can take hours to find that handwritten, tattered transcript from 1984.

Records management can also involve the digitization of all the records in your current systems as well as your archived legacy documents. By making existing and historical records available for modern digital delivery, you can decrease expenses and increase revenue.

Choosing a Partner

As your district begins to move records from paper to digital formats, it can feel overwhelming to determine which management system is best for you. The implications for evaluating a potential partner are many.

To help in evaluating a solution, here are some questions to ask:

- What is the student ordering experience like?

- Is there a lot of work the administrator needs to do?

- How confusing will this be to your stakeholders?

- Will the provider serve both school and district?

- Do they support all record types?

- Do they have an existing network of destinations that aligns with pathways your students are supporting?

- Does the solution support the workflows pathways require and follow the student throughout their lifelong learning journey?

A district-wide enterprise processing solution makes it easy for any requestor to order any record and send it to any destination, including print fulfillment and delivery for institutions that only receive paper transcripts. It should be an easy-to-use, logic-based system that aligns with district and high school workflows.

Best-in-class features include:

- Smart order routing getting the requests to the right place across the district whether current student with high school fulfillment or alumni to be fulfilled at the district.

- Centralization of records processing allowing district visibility into high schools.

- Ease of use for students that takes the guesswork out of ordering.

- Ability to seamlessly move records from high schools to the district office.

- The opportunity to leverage revenue to cover other areas of the service.
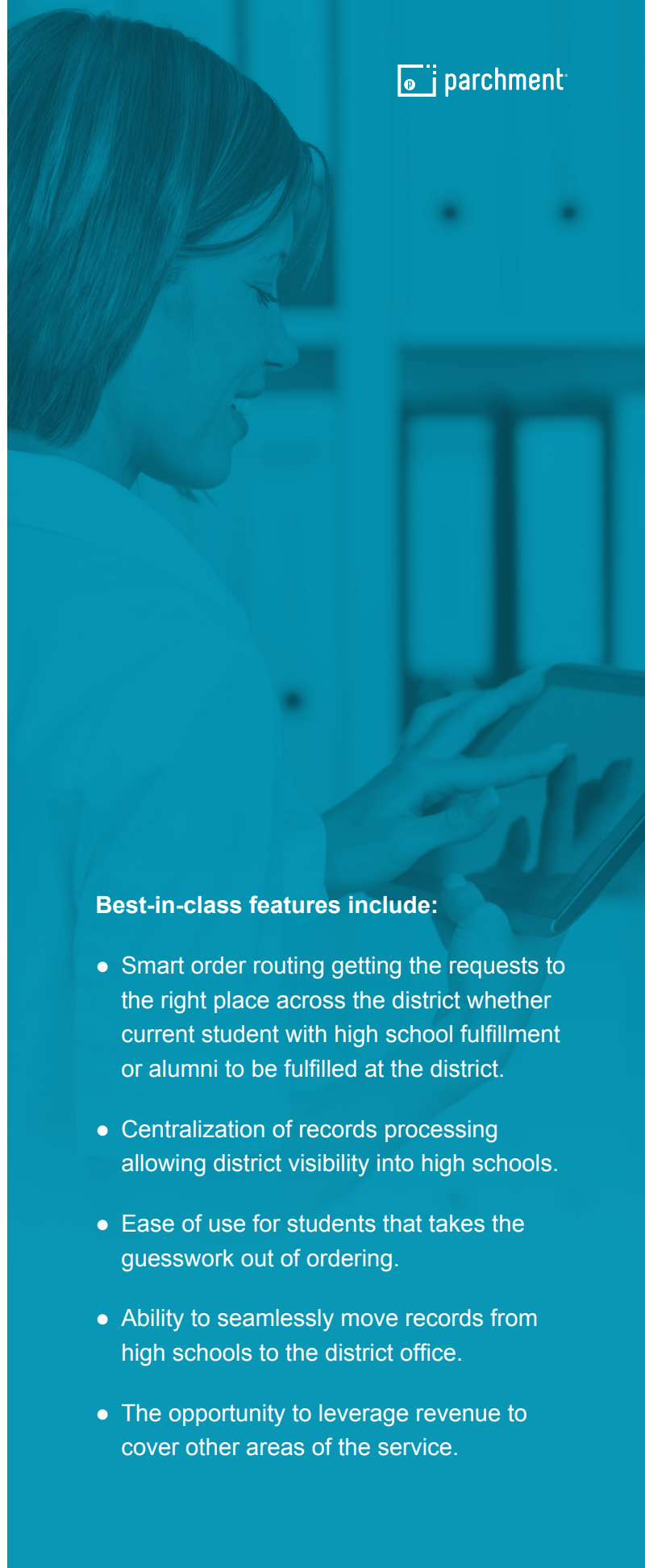
What to Look for in a Records Management Solution

Before looking outward at potential solution providers, look inward by analyzing your existing process for managing student records and what record types you want to support, now and in the future. Then identify who requests records and how. The goal is a consistent and positive ordering experience.

Then let the search begin! Here are the key attributes, functionalities and capabilities a strategic and effective student records management platform should have.

For Learners:

- Digital technology allowing all requesters to easily order and track documents.

- Availability of all record types via branded school or district portal.

- Convenient, mobile-friendly ordering anywhere, anytime, on any device.

- Electronic or print delivery of any document to any destination worldwide.

- Student support and resources to reduce questions and ensure positive experiences.

For Schools and Districts:

- Centralized records processing, smart-order routing, records storage.

- Secure and tamper-proof requests for current students, alumni, parents and third parties.

- Alignment with application workflows of admissions office, reducing errors and facilitating faster admissions decisions.

- Process efficiencies by auto-matching record to roster, enabling requests to be viewed and approved.

- Secure, FERPA-compliant processing.

- Quick and easy transfer of records to district office post-graduation.

- Ability to digitize and manage legacy records, making them safe and accessible.

- Reporting and analytics for informed decision making.

- Integration with existing systems, like your SIS.

- Free training and school/district marketing materials to speed adoption.

Before making your selection, look closely at the mission and culture of the platform providers. The right partner will be as passionate as you are about enabling your learners to turn their credentials into opportunities.

The Future of Student Records Management

Today, we are improving pathways through better efficiency and verification. When universities and employers receive digital data, they provide a better experience for learners and administrators.

With Parchment, you can now see where students are applying and where they are getting in (with Parchment Send and Analyze), enabling you to improve your college and career readiness process. As data scales, we hope to improve evaluation (via credit transfer), guidance (with our admissions tools) and recruitment (using Parchment Receive and Analyze tools). Over time, this creates the opportunity to translate data into improved experiences.

Resources

A Day in Your Life with a Comprehensive Student Record Management Platform

K-12 Complete Student Record Management

K-12 Complete Student Record Management Demo

K-12 Buyer's Guide

Records Management in Action

Here are just a few examples of what a records management platform can do for your district. **Albuquerque Public Schools** was taking alumni and verification requests at multiple sites across the district and questioned if alumni and third parties were making requests at the right place.

Parchment centralized all alumni and verification requests at the district, making it easy for their staff, alumni and third parties.

Frustrated with the maintenance of their legacy records, **Pennsbury School District** partnered with Parchment to digitize all of their records, allowing centralized, easy access. Verification turnaround time is now hours and minutes instead of days and weeks.

Saddleback Valley USD was looking for additional sources of revenue. With Parchment, the district now utilizes surcharge fees and generates over $30,000 a year to reinvest in their students and community.

![parchment logo]