



Streamlining Activity Fund Management at Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District

The Challenge

In 2016, Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District (the District) recognized it needed to improve its approach to school activity fund management. The District's collection approach centered around teachers handling cash or checks within the classroom, which proved to be taxing.

"On a few occasions, our teachers expressed that they felt more like bank tellers than educators, as they were spending a great deal of their classroom time collecting money, managing cashboxes, and chasing down late payments," said Dr. Erika Jones, the District's Business Service Coordinator. "And, ultimately, it resulted in lost productivity."

This loss of productivity also extended to school bookkeepers and secretaries responsible for processing cash and check payments. Relying on manual, spreadsheet-driven processes to record, track, and reconcile these payments, staff often found themselves consumed with tedious and time-consuming accounting tasks that were not conducive to effective collaboration.

"Using spreadsheets deprived us of the ability to monitor the transaction matching process and manage it in one centralized location," recalled Dr. Jones. "As a result, our staff were forced to devote a significant

amount of time to emailing back and forth, comparing versions, meeting with colleagues, and re-entering data."

Beyond these inefficiencies, the District's manual processes also carried a higher risk of human error.

"Since we were relying on manual data entry, transposition and transcription errors were unavoidable. Even the most attentive bookkeeper can easily make a mistake with just a single incorrect keystroke," explained Dr. Jones. "And unfortunately, spreadsheet errors tend to have a cascading effect. If even one cell in the spreadsheet was incorrect, the accuracy of the entire dataset was compromised."

ABOUT CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District is the third largest public school district in the state of Texas with 91 schools in operation. Founded in 1939, the District serves more than 116,000 students from Houston, the city of Jersey Village, and other unincorporated areas in Harris County.

These data integrity issues were compounded by the fact that Dr. Jones and other district-level staff had no real-time visibility into each school's data, making it more difficult to spot errors. This lack of visibility, combined with the lack of auditable controls, resulted in increased costs for the District while impacting its ability to comply with accounting standards, government regulations, and reporting requirements.

Results

Given these challenges, the District adopted SchoolCash Management – a fully integrated school activity fund management solution from KEV Group.

District staff were impressed with the solution's user-friendly functionality and ability to manage day-to-day transactions with ease. In addition to providing a robust solution for online payments, district staff recognized that SchoolCash's automated capabilities would streamline their processes such as check writing, receipt writing, journal entries, and purchase orders.

The District has seen promising adoption rates from parents paying for fees and activities online in a relatively short period, achieving an adoption rate of 56%—including 11 schools boasting rates of 90% or higher. This number is expected to climb to 65% or beyond in the 2021/22 school year.

“By reducing the need for cash handling in schools by over 50%, teachers are now spending half as much time collecting and managing payments,” explains Dr. Jones. “This gives our teachers more time to focus on what matters most: student learning and achievement.”

These efficiencies have also carried over to school bookkeepers.

“Since all online payments are automatically posted to the general ledger in real-time, our bookkeepers no longer have to undertake the labor-intensive effort to manually reconcile payments,” said Dr. Jones. “These automated capabilities also give us more confidence in the accuracy of our records as SchoolCash has greatly reduced error-prone, manual data entry.”

At the central office level, Dr. Jones and other district administrators have benefitted from complete visibility into, and real-time control of, all fund management processes.

“SchoolCash allows us to easily generate detailed school-level financial reports that can be consolidated by district staff for a comprehensive view of each schools' finances,” explains Dr. Jones. “All reports can be exported as PDFs for easy printing and sharing, making audits significantly easier with no findings.”

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Cypress-Fairbanks ISD At A Glance



Parent/Guardian
Participation Rate

56%



Number of Parents
Using SchoolCash

61,860



Number of
Students

116,000



Schools in the
District

91

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— Dr. Erika Jones

District’s Business Service Coordinator



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KEV Group provides the only unified school activity and district fee management solution that enables K-12 schools to manage every dollar accurately, consistently, and efficiently. By seamlessly integrating and automating all activity fund management processes, our solutions provide real-time visibility and control over how districts and schools create, collect, manage, track, and reconcile school activity and district fees. Parents/guardians benefit from an easy-to-use solution that offers convenience and supports all payment types. More than 25,500 schools across North America rely on KEV to manage over \$4 billion in activity funds annually, and over 40% are members of the Council of the Great City Schools. Visit kevgroup.com to learn more.