An Innovative Approach to Knowledge Management: How Scaling Social Emotional Learning Through Technology Led to Systemic Change

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter summarizes a case study of the Harborwoods Central School District's successful implementation of a knowledge management system to improve social emotional learning for students and teachers. The case study highlights the challenges faced by K12 education in the realm of EdTech, including high costs, wasted instructional time, and tools that do not align with district goals. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in the adoption of EdTech solutions without proper professional development. The case study explores how Harborwoods transformed resistant teachers into tech-savvy experts and how they supported their school community through social emotional learning, AI, and collaboration. The analysis identifies an autonomous approach, adopting AI and technology tools, structured project management, and continuous collaboration and innovation as the main drivers behind Harborwoods' success. The findings can help school leaders to develop effective strategies for improving EdTech usage, saving time and money for school systems, and enhancing learning outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Harborwoods Central School District (HCSD) is a school district educating approximately 4,000 students from grades K through 12 (K12). The goal of the Harborwoods Central School District is to educate students and develop life-long learners who can navigate a "diverse global society." To meet this goal, superintendent Dr. Williams and a team of district leaders created a 5-year strategic technology plan ad-

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dressing the issues they deemed critical to achieving their goals. Sheila Ferguson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, led a team that included Denise Cowley, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Administration, and Dr. Danielle Lombardi, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. Along with crucial educators and building leaders, this team identified three overarching goals for the school year 2022-2023: Innovation, Curriculum, and Finance. Dr. Lombardi led the development of a knowledge management system (KMS), to address one of the curricular goals, improving Social Emotional Learning (SEL). The HCSD team wanted to try a novel approach to address their SEL goals by integrating a technology solution along with new professional development strategies. The strategic plan and district goals align with their vision and mission, which are as follows:

The mission of Harborwoods CSD is to provide an innovative and collaborative learning environment where all students are empowered to realize their unique potential while striving for academic excellence…Harborwoods is committed to developing life-long learners with the intellectual, social, and emotional skills necessary to achieve success as active citizens within their local community and in an ever-changing diverse global society.

To achieve its goals, HCSD needed to implement a district-wide KMS that was clear, aligned to outcomes, and measurable. Dr. Williams knew that developing a strategic KM (knowledge management) plan and ensuring its effectiveness required a multifaceted set of metrics embedded throughout the plan's implementation. Embracing new technologies and a shift in professional development were key strategies to achieve their goals, especially after past failed attempts at scaled change. The Harborwoods KMS aimed to avoid the problems encountered with previous initiatives by aligning tech initiatives, professional development, and a scalable approach to learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The implementation of EdTech in K12 organizations has been fraught with challenges for district leaders in the United States. The current state of education, specifically regarding EdTech, has led to various issues such as educator dissatisfaction, increased costs, and wasted instructional time, among others (BCG, 2021; Graham, 2021; Jotkoff, 2022). The market is flooded with over 9,000 EdTech tools, including 1,500 academic tools (Cauthen, 2021). K12 school systems are spending nearly $31 billion per year on tech solutions for their students and staff, and this amount is projected to increase to $45 billion by 2025 (Holon IQ, 2021). Unfortunately, students use an average of 74 different EdTech tools, while educators use 86, and half of them are underused, ineffective, or not used at all (Kuykendall April 2022, June 2022). The selection and implementation of EdTech in educational institutions are multifaceted processes that involve various factors such as funding, administrative support, optimism, and uncertainty (Lestari & Subriadi, 2021). One significant driver for the rapid increase in EdTech use was the shift to remote and hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed how educators previously used tech solutions. Before, these solutions were used to provide ancillary support and instruction to students, but now they are used as a primary delivery tool for academic content, to manage student information, deliver instruction, and assess learning (Železný-Green, 2022). Districts sought to include multiple stakeholders in the decision-making process, knowing that a committee process for selecting