

Desert Sands Unified School District's Commitment to Digital Equity and Data-Driven Decision Making

Background

Desert Sands Unified School District is a suburban school district serving approximately 26,000 students. As part of the Connect: One to World Device Initiative and to ensure and enhance digital equity and access for all scholars, the district implemented a 1:1 Chromebook program for TK-12 students and established a private LTE network to ensure all students have access to the necessary technology for their education.

The Challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to revisit and revise the district's approach to student connectivity, particularly monitoring and supporting home internet access. Equitable internet access was crucial to providing learning opportunities and ensuring all students could participate in digital learning. Post-pandemic connectivity remains at the forefront as the district strives to increase student access to reliable connectivity. To address these challenges, the district needed a comprehensive connectivity dashboard to view and manage student connectivity alongside the academic performance and attendance data available on the district's Data Warehouse.



Implementation

Desert Sands Unified School District leveraged nationwide data housed on the CoSN Digital Equity Dashboard and collaborated with Innive, a technology partner, to build a data dashboard designed to show the correlation between academic performance and attendance. This initiative aimed to provide a holistic view of student engagement and identify areas needing support. Despite the work of the Connect Initiative, the lack of comprehensive connectivity data proved to be a critical gap in this process. Although nationwide download and upload speeds were able to be leveraged, the dashboard could only partially achieve its potential in highlighting the impact of home internet access on student outcomes.

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District Quick Facts:

Enrollment: 26,162 students

District area: 760 sq. miles

Number of Buildings: 34 schools; (19 elementary, 8 middle, 7 high)

Low socioeconomic status: approximately 70%

Students with disabilities: approximately 13%

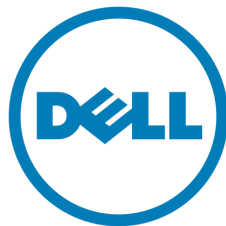
Outcomes

Despite the missing publically available connectivity information, the dashboard developed in partnership with CoSN and Innive provided valuable insights into academic performance and attendance trends. The experience demonstrated that the quality and availability of the data input is crucial for effective data-driven decision-making. Desert Sands Unified School District's efforts continue to be bolstered by partnerships and collaboration with One Future Coachella Valley and the Connectivity Task Force, as well as with local partners, including city partners, district partners, and local businesses. These collaborations are helping the district work to address connectivity challenges more effectively and leverage community resources to continue to support student success.



Lessons Learned and Future Aspirations

Desert Sands Unified School District realized the necessity of having transparent conversations and setting clear expectations about the end product's capabilities. Moving forward, the district aims to improve its data collection methods to include comprehensive connectivity information. By ensuring this critical data is available, Desert Sands Unified School District can better analyze and address the digital equity gaps impacting student performance.



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