

Supporting Employee Professional Growth

How the Washoe County School District created a common platform to align professional development to evaluation results and compliance needs



The Washoe County School District, the second largest school district in Nevada, is located in western Nevada on the California border. Encompassing the cities of Reno and Sparks, the District is also the largest employer in Washoe County. Its 115 schools employ over 3400 teachers, administrators and classified employees, serving over 65,000 students across the county. The District is committed to an educational system that provides all students with the opportunity to achieve academic success and develop personal and civic responsibility, and upon graduation, be ready to take the next steps towards college or career. The District’s mission is to support “every child, by name and face, to graduation.”

Managing a Complex Process

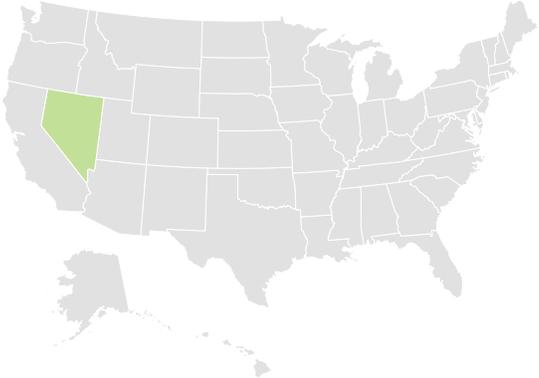
The District has always recognized that conducting effective educator evaluations and addressing the results is essential to the accomplishment of its goals. Previously, teachers were evaluated once a year, primarily using a paper-based process. This made tracking completions exceedingly difficult; completed evaluations were stored at the District’s Human Resources department, and missing or incomplete evaluations often went unnoticed for months because of the sheer volume of paperwork involved. Teachers struggled as well; the paper-based evaluation system didn’t offer many opportunities for collaboration, so they often didn’t feel like partners in the process.

Once evaluations were completed, the District was challenged with the task of analyzing all the data to determine areas of need and next steps, especially with regards to professional development. “To make this a true professional growth system, we needed to tie it into a professional learning system aligned to our frameworks to make it really work,” said Yvette Deighton, Program Coordinator. “The political landscape of our legislature indicated that we would have to provide more robust data around teacher effectiveness, which we would

have to gather in a laborious way.” In short, ensuring all District employees were evaluated in a timely fashion, and providing actionable results, was a daunting task.

School Stats

Washoe County School District,
Reno Nevada



District Statistics:

SCHOOLS: 115	GRADES: K-12
STUDENTS: 65,682	SETTING: CITY
TEACHERS: 3154	
NON-TEACHING STAFF: 273	

One Portal to Serve Them All

The Washoe County School District searched for a solution that could serve as a true professional growth system for District employees, a common platform for conducting and tracking evaluations that aligned professional development to evaluation results and compliance needs. The District partnered with Performance Matters to develop MyPGS, the District's comprehensive professional growth system.

The District was drawn to Performance Matters for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the comprehensive nature of the system and the different components available through the platform. The evaluation process itself has become much more collaborative, and the integration with professional development gives employees a tool to immediately address their results. "This is definitely where we're



"Performance Matters came out ahead due to its configurable nature, which most closely fit our needs."

Jim Grace | HCMS Coordinator

Through the MyPGS portal, all District employees log in using one set of credentials and access evaluations, view feedback, and manage all professional learning. At a glance dashboard reporting allowed administrators to track evaluation progress and completions through one location, ensuring all employees were evaluated according to the District's schedule. Before MyPGS, "anything late or missed wasn't known about for weeks or months later," said Mike Paul, Director of Professional Growth Systems and TIF Grants. "There was nothing for accountability."

headed," said Mike. "And teacher response has been positive in making the evaluation a partnership."

Currently, District professional development is still largely siloed. Departments created their own learning opportunities, and without a real approval process, it's challenging for the District's Department of Professional Learning to manage the content and quality of available learning opportunities. Some departments created and delivered their own workshops, independent of the Department, so there was no way to track and manage these opportunities.

With MyPGS, the District is able to pull all professional development into one place and align content to both evaluation results and compliance needs. The implementation of a tiered approval process helps the District ensure that only the highest quality content is released to the online catalog. A real benefit of streamlining the process is that it will

allow the District to broaden its focus to include more than just compliance-aligned professional development. "By being more efficient in compliance, we can shift our focus to support," said Jim Grace, HCMS Coordinator. Robust reporting tools help the District to track evaluation and professional learning completions and progress.

