

Grand Island School District Saves Time with SEQUEL

What you see on a normal day at public schools, like the ones in Grand Island, Nebraska, is a frenzy of activity. Buses drop off hundreds of kids every day, teachers meet to plan lessons, lockers open and close, children run and play, homework is assigned... But, behind the scenes, student and district information must be processed in a structured, efficient manner to make it all work. The Grand Island Public School District serves the needs of over 7,000 students in grades K through 12, both with regular classes and special programs. With good management, quality staff, and a variety of teaching methods, they accomplish their mission: "Every Student, Every Day, A Success."

To keep school business moving efficiently on a day-to-day basis, the Grand Island Public School District provides users with access to a variety of data including file records, reports, student absence summaries, spreadsheets, and fiscal year information. One tool that has allowed users to get the information they need, quickly and easily, is SEQUEL™, Help/Systems' business intelligence solution for the IBM® System i.™ Maurice Shellhaas, Director of Data Processing for the Grand Island district, says that SEQUEL is a tremendous time saver. "We started using SEQUEL in 1998, along with our NCS Pearson CIMS application software. Now, at least 100 people in the school district use the information that I make available to them by running SEQUEL views, tables, and reports.

"The development time with SEQUEL is much shorter than if I had to program everything myself. I really like SEQUEL scripting and the way it works with our application software. It enables me to run any number of SEQUEL tasks sequentially and the parameter passing is very powerful. For example, some of our detail files store each fiscal year as a separate file member. When a user is working in CIMS, the fiscal year, which determines the file member they need to open, is stored in a local data area. With SEQUEL scripting, we can capture the fiscal year and pass that variable to various SEQUEL reports so they'll be associated with the proper member."



Maurice describes another way SEQUEL saves programming hours. “SEQUEL’s ability to merge records, and its conditional processing, has enabled me to write reports that I previously could only write in RPG. And the ability to apply mass changes to records in our files using SEQUEL Update has saved us a lot of time too. This unique feature of SEQUEL allows us to use information in one file to update records in another file.

“We also make extensive use of the SEQUEL Tabler. There are a number of agencies that the school district must report to—the EEOC, Office of Civil Rights, and so on. The Tabler allows us to report to them directly without downloading to Excel and having to use the pivot feature in Excel. With SEQUEL, we’ve streamlined that process.”


The district also uses SEQUEL to track student absences. According to Maurice, the district administration needed an accurate way to report excused and unexcused

absences. “We use SEQUEL’s powerful date math calculations to do 7-day summaries of absences. SEQUEL then uses ESEND™ [the file distribution software] to e-mail the data—either as separate attached files or embedded in the body of the e-mail. This has been very helpful. For example, folks on UNIX have had problems opening my attached files. So I use SEQUEL to embed the formatted information in the body of the e-mail, and there’s no problem. Before SEQUEL, it used to be a real paper chase.

“In addition, I’ve placed a lot of SEQUEL reports on CIMS menus. SEQUEL’s run-time prompting enables users to be very specific about the information they retrieve. I’ve also made statistical profiles of our district, to be available to selected users by placing SEQUEL-generated spreadsheets on CIMS menus.”

With SEQUEL, Grand Island School District has learned how to provide information to users and how to save time in their processes. When school operations run effortlessly,

staff can focus their time and energy where it’s really needed—in the classroom with students, creating new successes every day.

A photograph of four children, two girls and two boys, standing and holding a large white rectangular sign. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The child on the far left is a girl with brown hair wearing a yellow shirt. The child next to her is a boy with short brown hair wearing a red shirt. The child next to him is a girl with long dark hair wearing a blue shirt. The child on the far right is a boy with short dark hair wearing a green shirt. They are all wearing jeans and are barefoot. The sign they are holding has text on it.

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