

Edsby at Hillsborough County Public Schools

Massive use of a K-12 LMS at one of the largest school districts in the U.S.

Not long ago, Hillsborough County Public Schools had a grading and reporting problem it needed to solve.

The eighth-largest school district in the U.S.—centered around Tampa, Florida—had been using electronic gradebooks to try to share grades with students and parents. Its middle and high schools and its elementary schools originally each used different applications. Elementary schools in the county only used the gradebook for report cards. At middle and high schools, usage depended on the teacher.

Hillsborough's previous system wasn't really a great enterprise platform, said IT staff. Transferring students between schools created problems. It was not truly web-based. Data was stored in the cloud, but users had to install browser plug-ins in order to access the gradebook. There were problems with Mac OS vs. Windows, and poor mobile support.

Hillsborough district staff decided a change needed to be made. Officials wanted something easy to use, and easy for sharing information with students and parents.

Better platform support with Edsby

In its 2013/2014 school year, Hillsborough moved its 200,000 students, 270 school sites, 18,000 teachers and other staff to the social learning management system Edsby, and made its use a matter of policy.

Edsby allowed Hillsborough to offer more flexible login options to students, parents and—especially—teachers. Browser plug-ins required by the county's previous system required teachers to enter grades only in certain places on certain devices on certain platforms.

The Edsby web-based interface means no client, so the district doesn't have to worry about what users have installed. It gives the district a lot more flexibility and allows for a lot more students, parents and staff access.

“Edsby was connected to the SIS and available to every user in the district in under two months.”

Sixty-day rollout to over 200,000 users

Edsby was installed surprisingly quickly at Hillsborough, given that the platform connects hundreds of thousands of students and manages more than 50,000 classes in the district every academic quarter.

The county had the system populated with hundreds of thousands of teachers, students and classes and ready to go in sixty days. The secret: Edsby's two-way integration with the district's custom student information system (SIS), the key legacy application used to manage student and class data in the district. Even though Hillsborough's SIS was custom-built for the county, a flexible Edsby structure for integrating with customer systems allowed the SIS integration to be performed in just days.



More than a
quarter million
students, staff, and
parents use Edsby
in Hillsborough
County in Florida



“We had Edsby connected to the SIS and up and available to every user in the district in under two months,” said Steven Asbury, Chief Technical Officer at Edsby.

Hillsborough developed its own parent registration system to interface with Edsby. Within the first three weeks, Hillsborough had about 25,000 parents accounts.

Students and teachers make huge use of Edsby

Every week, more than 81,000 unique students, teachers and parents log into Hillsborough’s Edsby system at least once. Just over half of them use an Edsby mobile app for iOS or Android. The rest use a web browser. A small percentage use both.

The district has seen an incredible increase in student participation in online grades and on-the-fly access. Usage statistics show students constantly on Edsby from their phones, iPods and tablets through the day. Hillsborough students that use Edsby check it an average of 5 times a day according to system logs. Many Hillsborough students post on social media that they use Edsby more than Facebook or Twitter.

“Kids check Edsby constantly after tests. We’re reaching students where they are. And they’re not in the library. They’re online,” noted Taina Cote, a teacher at East Bay High School in Riverview, Florida.

Edsby manages a massive amount of academic results data entered by teachers at Hillsborough.

“We have 37 million Hillsborough student assessments in the system,” said Asbury. “We process something like a half-million changes per day for Hillsborough in just the Edsby gradebook alone. That’s not including student or parent account information changes, classes being added,

comments in classes or anything else.”

Every year at Hillsborough, more than 800,000 student report cards are generated using Edsby, with about half printed right from Edsby on the district’s template, and the other half transmitted to the district IT department for centralized printing at the district’s request.

Beyond just sharing grades with Edsby

All district teachers have to use the Edsby gradebook for entering their class assessments, but the safe, closed-to-the-public Facebook-like electronic classroom Edsby creates for every class is allowing some of them to take Edsby to the next level.

Some teachers are standing out by embracing Edsby’s social learning features. They’re creating groups for internal class collaboration and resource sharing without having to involve IT.

Some language arts teachers are using Edsby to present a question of the day that students have to write a response to. Some teachers at Hillsborough schools use it to do the same thing in computer lab environments, where every child is assured of being connected.

“Edsby has become a permanent fixture in my classroom. It is very easy to upload documents so that students can access the documents and complete tasks in the class or at home. I recommend Edsby to help students become self-initiated learners,” said Ira Glover, a teacher at Franklin Middle Magnet School in Tampa, Florida.

“I saw in Edsby the fulfillment of a wish list that I’ve had since I started teaching,” said James Stewart, a teacher at Wharton High School in Tampa. “Edsby finally gives teachers and students a secure, intuitive, powerful toolset to bring educational collaboration into the modern age.”

Parental engagement

Edsby has allowed the district to engage its parents on a deeper level and on a much more regular basis than before.

Hillsborough has more than one family in three receiving school and district news updates and academic progress on their children thanks to Hillsborough’s secure parent self-service registration that ensures it’s actually a parent of the student accessing the system.

By contrast, the county’s previous online gradebook required that parent validation codes be sent home with the student—and there was never a guarantee the codes would make it home, or that it really was the parent that provisioned the account.

“I hardly ever get an email from a parent asking for clarification on what’s going on.”

Amanda Morin, a teacher at Walker Middle Magnet School in the Tampa suburb of Odessa, credits Edsby with making parent reporting easier.

“I hardly ever get an email from a parent asking for clarification on what’s going on. I would say that means I’m communicating well with them,” said Morin.

Edsby at Hillsborough County by the Numbers

Students, parents and staff make wide use of Edsby in Hillsborough County, using it far more than the district's previous system. An average of 100,000 students, teachers and parents log in to Edsby at least once every week. At Hillsborough, Edsby serves about 20 million requests every school day, with independently measured response times averaging 280 milliseconds.

204,958 Student Accounts

15,780 Staff Accounts

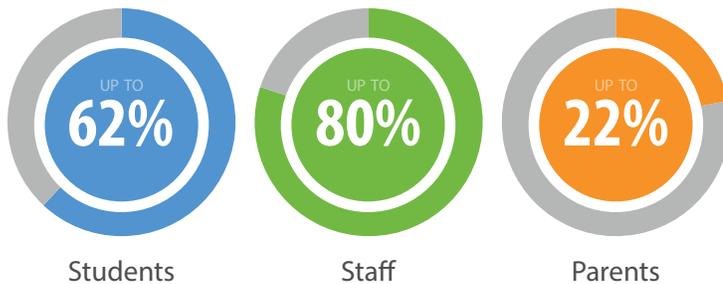
53,158 Parent Accounts

Current as of Dec 31, 2014. Totals change daily.

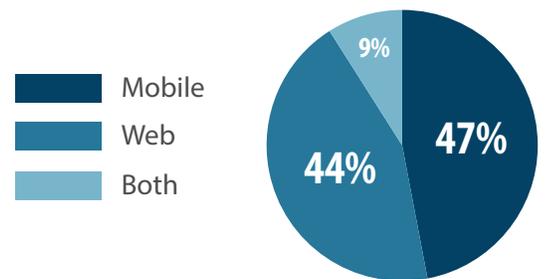


Not counting scheduled maintenance.

Log in at least once a week



Logins by platform



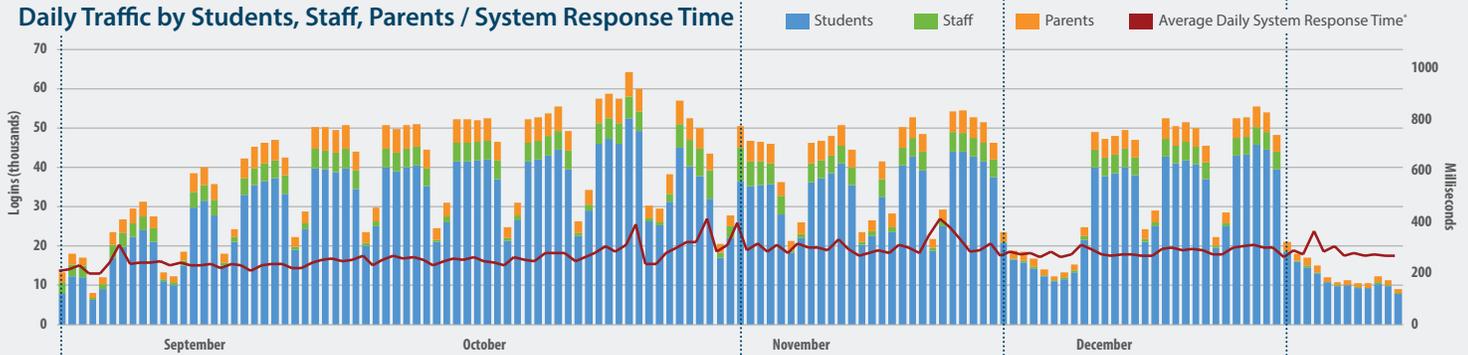
FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

FIRST SEMESTER REPORT CARDS TEACHER DATA ENTRY DEADLINE
32,537 report card sheets submitted in one day, 251,744 individual student grades.

FALL BREAK

WINTER BREAK

Daily Traffic by Students, Staff, Parents / System Response Time



Overall Requests per Day / Daily GBs Served



** Source: Pingdom **Source: Apache log files*