

Seriously powerful student tracking

Michael Tunks introduces STARS, his new tracking system suited to both primary and secondary schools

Jessica SMITH Class: 1B Grade: 1 Female

Student Details
 I was born on Saturday December 7 2002
 I am 6 years old - 145 days to my next birthday.

My teacher is Ms Wolf
 Student Number: 123456789
 Currently Enrolled: Yes

Contact Numbers
 Home Phone: 9123 4567
 Mother Mobile: 0412 234 567
 Father Mobile: 0412 234 567
Emergency Contact: Sharyn Green
 Telephone: 9123 4567

Home Details
 Mr & Mrs Smith
 3 Smith Pl
 SMITHTON 2777

Classes
 K KD 2008
Yr1 1B 2009
 Yr2 - 2010
 Yr3 - 2011
 Yr4 - 2012
 Yr5 - 2013
 Yr6 - 2014

Academic
 View Results
 English Grade
 Maths Grade
 Reading Record

Behaviour
 Behaviour Referral 16 (Prev 1)
 Positive Behaviour 11 (Prev 0)
 Attendance
 Medical

Learning Support
 LST Review Notes
Support Notes
 Documentation
 Counsellor Notes
 ESL notes
 Reading Recovery

STARS Student Profile

Behaviour Contact Reports Interrogate

From: 30-06-2009 To: 14-07-2009 Grouping: Whole School

Location	Count	Time Periods	Count	Action Taken	Count	Grades	Count
Home class	11 (48%)	Class time	11 (44%)	Time out (with executive)	15 (63%)	Grade 4	18 (28%)
Grass Area	5 (21%)	Recess	9 (38%)	Detention	9 (38%)	Grade K	16 (23%)
Concrete-paths	4 (17%)	Lunch	2 (8%)	Warning - no detention	0	Grade 3	12 (17%)
Toilets	4 (17%)	Before school	2 (8%)	Red Card	0	Grade 5	9 (13%)
Office Area	0	After school	0	Sent home with parent	0	Grade 6	8 (12%)
Gym	0	OOS	0	Suspension (internal)	0	Grade 2	4 (6%)
Library	0	Total Count:	24	Suspension (external)	0	Grade 1	2 (3%)
Home school travel	0			Expulsion	0	Total Count:	69
Passive play	0			Time out warning	0		
Computer LC	0			Blue Card	0		
Multi-purpose	0			Investigation	0		
Equipment	0			Total Count:	24		
RFF class	0						
Hall	0						
Total Count:	24						

Time Blocks	Count	Minor Behaviour Problems	Count	Major Behaviour Problems	Count
11.00 - 11.30am	8 (33%)	Physical contact / aggression	6 (25%)	Fighting / physical violence	3 (10%)
2.00 - 2.30pm	5 (21%)	Defiance / non-compliance / disobedience	1 (4%)	Property damage	2 (7%)
1.30 - 2.00pm	4 (17%)	Disruption	1 (4%)	Truancy	1 (3%)
12.30 - 1.00pm	2 (8%)	Out of Bounds	1 (4%)	Vandalism	1 (3%)
8.30 - 9.00am	2 (8%)	Other	0	Graffiti	1 (3%)
11.30 - 12.00pm	1 (4%)	Inappropriate verbal language	0	Defiance / non-compliance / disobedience (major)	1 (3%)
12.00 - 12.30pm	1 (4%)	Uniform	0	Harassment / Bullying	1 (3%)
10.30 - 11.00am	1 (4%)	Missuse of information and other electronic technology	0		
1.00 - 1.30pm	0				
2.30 - 3.00pm	0				
3.00 - 3.30pm	0				

Interrogate Results

Grades: Select All
 Location: -Select-
 Time Periods: -Select-
 Action Taken: -Select-
 Time Blocks: -Select-
 Minor Behaviour: -Select-
 Major Behaviour: -Select-
 Enter

Report on behaviour patterns – each area can be customised by the school

Early in 2008, a community of schools (a high school and its feeder primary schools) commissioned my company to build a student tracking and recording system. The schools' principals wanted a system that would systematically collect data throughout a student's primary and secondary years – and so STARS, a high security internet-based system, was born.

The initial concept was to design a uniform system that would accommodate current processes in the participating schools and funnel information to the high school with graduating students. However, it soon became apparent

that, even in a close working community, school processes were inherently different and a highly customisable system was required. Taking this approach has proven to be a real strength of the system as schools can mould STARS to match their own internal processes.

STARS gives schools the ability to organise information about any student so it is easily and instantly accessible and can be interrogated and analysed at a student, class, grade or school level.

Imagine this scenario: There's a tap on your door and your assistant says: "Mrs Smith has just dropped in and would like a quick word with you about Jessica."

You reply, "Please tell her I will be with her in a few minutes."

You turn to your computer screen and bring up your student tracking program. Finding Jessica Smith in the alphabetical student list, you click to view her student profile summary page.

The photograph reminds you of a recent exchange you had with Jessica. You note her class history and current teacher. Home contact details tell you there is a Mr Smith and any siblings at the school.

Behaviour indicators display the balance of good vs. poor behaviour contacts for the current and previous years and the support summary identifies any special programs in place.

Details for each of these areas are listed on accompanying pages just a click away. Academic assessments, medical conditions and plans, student reports and related documents and a photo gallery of work samples and activities are all linked to the open profile page.

Sixty seconds after the tap on your door you confidently invite Mrs Smith into your office. "How are you Mrs Smith please come in, how is Mr Smith..."

Student profiling

The centrepiece of STARS is the student profile, this links all available information on one page.

Behaviour

The first goal of the initial project was the recording of poor student behaviour as participating schools wanted to be able to do more with the collected data than their current systems could provide. The STARS behaviour referral module provides schools with a rich depth of information on behaviour patterns in the school. Also included are salient elements from the body of positive behaviour literature. An extensive analysis and reporting module allows tabling, graphing and interrogation of the data.

To balance the picture, good behaviour via awards and certificates can also be recorded.

High School N-Awards

The Secondary School STARS includes the recording and tracking of N-Awards and generates a formatted letter to parents detailing specific actions required of the student.

This version also includes email notification of N-Awards and behaviour referrals to head teachers and deputy principals where requested by the entering staff member.

Learning support

A comprehensive module for initiating and tracking learning support interventions allows teachers to identify programs already in place and to refer a student for further assessment and support. Learning support team decisions and recommendations can also be recorded.

Anecdotal notes

Specialist teachers can also contribute via anecdotal notations. These are recorded by class, date and entering teacher and build a continuing historical record that can be accessed by a teacher at any time.

Documentation

Files such as written assessments or reports can be uploaded and linked to specific students allowing any form of documentation to be stored.

Medical and emergency

Schools can enter any medical conditions and identify students with that condition. Lists of students from across the school can be compiled and printed for any condition. For example, a list of anaphylactic students can be printed for display and distribution to staff.

In addition, emergency action plans can be entered and specific one page plans complete with student photograph can be printed. These are useful for display in staffrooms and some schools require teachers to carry these action plans while on playground duty.

Academic results

Regular assessment results can be entered and instantly analysed by class or grade. Graphs are generated displaying showing trends and growth patterns.

Student characteristics

Other student characteristics can also be entered and listed. For example, schools may wish to enter scripture preferences, sporting houses, etc. Any characteristic can be entered and tracked by the school.

Security of information

STARS is an internet application hosted on secure servers and protected by 128 bit encryption (like your online bank). Information is backed up regularly, providing schools with an extra layer of security. No software or hardware needs to be installed and STARS can be accessed from any internet connected computer.

Access is controlled by a centrally managed password hierarchy, with six levels of access provided. This enables, for example, top to bottom access to the whole database by the school's principal and limited access by a teacher to data on the children in a specific class.

What's in the future for STARS?

User schools are constantly suggesting new ways STARS can be used or extended. Some of these suggestions have included:

Learning Support referral and notes

What principals say about STARS

Jenny Eggins, Principal of Banksia Road Public School, is enthusiastic. She says: "STARS is just fantastic. It gives us a whole picture of how a student is performing and participating in our school. We can target our teaching and learning strategies and teacher training requirements. STARS allows us to make really good, informed decisions about what our students' needs are and how to support them."

Eric Jamieson, Principal at Plumpton High School in the western suburbs of Sydney, says: "STARS is an ideal application for helping to monitor and plan for student progress at school at an individual, group and whole-school level. By assembling a range of academic and behavioural information for access at one point, it is much easier to analyse the overall progress of each student at the school. This, of course, assists at a strategic level for supporting students.

"Information can also be aggregated for groups of students, such as year levels, to gain further insight into the performance and needs of such groups. Data-driven decision making has certainly been assisted through the use of STARS. For example, tabulating behaviour referrals is changing staff perceptions of behaviour patterns in the school and allowing a more pro-active approach to identified problem areas."

Parent conferences

In the Mrs Smith scenario at the beginning of this article, the principal could share the information on screen with Mrs Smith. Both could view the screen and work together to improve outcomes for Jessica.

Changing schools

If Jessica were to move to another school, a special password could be provided to allow the new school to view the records kept by her previous school. High schools could also link to data collected through the primary years.

Parent access

Schools could provide special access for parents to view selected data for their children. For example, reports, update contact details, view the photo gallery.

In this Information Age, STARS provides a much needed information management tool for schools. It's a seriously powerful, yet flexible system that provides educators with a comprehensive database of the school, the class and the individual student.

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