

SIS Review Report and Recommendation

Jessica Franco, Director of Operations

Background

The SIS Review Committee was assembled on October 15th with the intention to review potential SIS vendors for the upcoming 2020-21 school year. All were granted the opportunity to evaluate and provide feedback on rubrics consisting of measures created by each participant. The team identified the following areas of opportunity for a new SIS considering the challenges faced throughout our partnership StrongMind that began in the 2016-17 school year:

Current Challenges

- Reporting - constant issues with reports, they either do not generate results during peak periods (the reports stop working), have inconsistent information, or lack information. Not all staff have access to build their own reports and those that do need to utilize an external platform that also does not always function properly. We rely heavily on the data in the reports and have to find our own workarounds to get the information we need.
- Issues with the SIS and reporting are placed on “sprints” where the Strong Mind team reviews on spans of two weeks. We constantly have to re-prioritize tickets although the issues stem directly from the SIS platform. In some cases we have had issues resolved two months after a ticket was placed.
- Lack of CalPads (California) preemptive planning - this vendor is based out of Arizona, they are not familiar with CA mandates for charters. Other vendors participate in CalPads and CDE trainings to support reporting needs and updates. We constantly have to place a request for enhancements that are not addressed in a timely manner because they have to be placed on a “sprint”
- The SIS is simple, but not intuitive, for example when a scholar is withdrawn, other functions have to be manually processed (closing of special programs, ST records, etc.).
- The SIS makes it difficult to identify where a scholar is in the enrollment process
- The SIS is not necessarily designed to operate for an LEA with various charters. It is also tough to locate scholars based on simple parameters such as program, grade, charter, IEP, 504 etc.

The SIS Review Committee Members:

Jessica Franco (lead)

Oscar de Jesus, Project Admin

Erin Smith (Online)
 Kristy Smith (Options)
 Debra Stephan (Counseling)
 David Brasch (IT)
 Nora Barnhart (Attendance)
 Vanessa Beyer (Enrollment)
 Vanessa Plascencia (Compliance)
 Sophia Trivino (HR)
 Beth Sneyd (Assessments)

Platforms Evaluated:

StrongMind
 MIDAS
 PowerSchool
 School Pathways

Performance:

Members were asked to evaluate each potential vendor based on their preferred category within our rubric structure. Each ranked items on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being “Never” or “Not Evident” and 4 being “Extremely Evident” or “Always.” Reviewers are also given space in which to write comments and are encouraged to be as thorough and detailed as possible to ensure that decision makers have access to a comprehensive evaluation when selecting a SIS provider. Below is a summary of the rubric results, the highest ranking vendor was School Pathways which the exception of the evaluation conducted by David Brasch.

* StrongMind will be using PowerSchool as the SIS provider for the 2020-21 school year; we did not evaluate the current features since they will no longer be available for use.

Team Member	MIDAS	PowerSchool	School Pathways
Vanessa P.	16	21	28
David B.	-	41	40
Beth S.	16	28	32
Debra S.	13	19	24
Erin S.	9	20	57
Jessica F.	21	18	29

Sophia T.	-	-	-
Nora B.	20	25	28
Vanessa B.	20	19	26
Kristy S.	14	21.5	23
Totals	129	212.5	287

Pricing:

Proposals are based on a 3,000 scholar estimate for the 2020-21 school year. Please note, there is a difference in the format of each proposal as School Pathways itemizes based on features (all major features were included for the purpose of this estimate).

Vendor	Estimated SIS Fees for 20/21	Notes
StrongMind	\$77,597.00	Fees based on PowerSchool Est.
PowerSchool	\$77,597.00	Does not include bridge costs for curriculum or specify features included
School Pathways	\$168,450	Robust estimate includes all SIS features

Recommendation:

Our final recommendation is for Compass Charter Schools to cancel our existing partnership with StrongMind and pursue with School Pathways for the upcoming 2020-21 school year.

The team is excited to possibly join forces with Pathways once again and benefit from the many advanced features. Our hope is to have this system eliminate the need for an

external host for Master Agreements, Master Agreement Addendums, Activity Logs, AWRs, and data platforms (Power BI).

Please note the following:

- School Pathways performed the highest in all evaluated categories with the exception of IT (off by 1 point). The system has undergone several enhancements that may potentially serve as a solution to support attendance, master agreements, compliance, work samples, enrollment, reporting, and more! We anticipate the intuitive system will help with streamlining processes and limiting the need for additional staff hiring despite our growing enrollment.
- StrongMind will be moving to a Power School SIS in the 2020-21 school year, while this is exciting, PowerSchool appears to be designed to better support a brick-and-mortar charter.
- The PowerSchool SIS is an improvement from our current provider, it features many canned reports (including those for CalPads) and a user-friendly enrollment system. In our evaluations we determined the system lacked in the following areas:
 - MAs - no current integrated method to generate and send master agreements within the system
 - Attendance - no current integrated method to have parents take their own attendance. The reps discussed the possibility of creating a bridge with Parent Square to accommodate our current system. The attendance system currently caters to seat-based attendance with a layout that benefits brick-and-mortar instruction.
 - Document storage - only an admin has the ability to attach documents to scholar dashboards, it also required a separate login
- MIDAS completed presentation for us, but never followed-up by providing a demo account. They ensured they would be granting us temporary access to their SIS functions in order to allow for an informed evaluation of their product (this has not been completed to date). It appears to be a very promising platform with potential, but it is not quite ready to fit our needs in its current state.