Best Practices in the Use of Data Analytics

DISTRICT PROFILE: BALDWIN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CatchOn and Digital Promise joined forces in 2021 to provide participating Digital Promise League of Innovative School Districts a quick and seamless way to track and monitor digital engagement at the student level, enabling them to analyze the efficacy of their technology investments as well as identify those students who require intervention and/or are at risk of falling through the cracks — all in real time.

Seven districts ranging in various sizes and locality participated in the project, including Alabama's Baldwin County Public Schools. Unlike the other school districts participating in this program, Baldwin County Public Schools was already a CatchOn customer and had been using the tool for several months prior to the launch of the Digital Promise and CatchOn program. The district originally procured the tool to accomplish two objectives—strengthen its compliance efforts and measure the ROI of its EdTech tools. When the pandemic began in March 2020, the district quickly expanded its scope of usage of the tool to address new and unanticipated needs and challenges.

Baldwin County Public Schools' Data Analytics Objectives Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic

ENSURING COMPLIANCE

Baldwin originally purchased CatchOn to address security issues stemming from its one-to-one initiative. The introduction of devices opened the floodgates to an array of new digital tools and apps being used, and the district was having a difficult time tracking the tools their students and staff were using. This raised security compliance concerns because district leaders did not know the following:

- What apps and programs students and staff had installed and/or were using on their district-owned devices

- How students and teachers were using these apps and programs

- What the privacy policies and practices were for these apps pertaining to student data

Gaining insight into their students' application usage patterns as well as attaining access to third-party badging and security reviews within CatchOn's platform has enabled the district to address those questions.

DISTRICT PROFILE

Number of schools: **44**

Student enrollment: **30,602**

Free and Reduced Lunch: **38%**

TRACKING ROI

The district also purchased CatchOn to gain visibility into their district's application usage data and calculate the return on investment on their purchased digital apps and tools. **"I knew we were spending millions of dollars on software, but I did not know if that software was being used,"** said Homer Coffman, Chief Technology Officer at Baldwin County Public Schools. **"We are evolving into an enterprise K-12 school district, meaning that we are centralizing the purchasing process for apps. In order to make intelligent and informed decisions about the professional development and support we can provide regarding these tools, we have to know what the teachers and students are using."**

This type of actionable data has provided the district the visibility required to meet both objectives. Leaders are now tracking the apps and tools their students and teachers are using, enabling them to safeguard student data more effectively as well as to accurately calculate the ROI of their EdTech purchases.

How the District Expanded Its Usage of Data Analytics Following the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Baldwin's digital journey began very much like the other districts participating in this pilot: with a goal of leveraging data to inform ROI. What is interesting to see is not only how they accomplished that objective, as well as their compliance goal, but how they have greatly expanded their application of data analytics across the district. Below are some examples of the innovative ways Baldwin's leaders are currently using, and intend to use, their actionable data:

MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS AND ATTENDANCE

As the ramifications of the pandemic set in, Baldwin leaders quickly realized they needed to expand their original analytics objectives and begin leveraging their actionable data to also monitor student progress and attendance in their virtual learning environments. **"When COVID began, we had to move in a completely different direction,"** said Coffman. **"We had 8,000 students learning in a virtual environment. We wanted to make sure they were attending classes, doing their work, and had some structure to their days. Having access to our usage and engagement data helped us accomplish that and was very beneficial."**

PARENT/GUARDIAN NOTIFICATIONS REGARDING STUDENT DATA

As part of their compliance strategy and to meet FERPA requirements, Baldwin has started providing parents with more information about the software programs their students are using. Baldwin is currently using CatchOn to generate reports of the approved apps students and staff can use. The Baldwin team intends to provide that information to parents next school year. **"We want to inform parents about the software packages we are using and let them know about the vendors we use that require us to provide student data,"** said Coffman. **"We are already beginning to use CatchOn to generate that information, and we will begin distributing it to our parent community next year."**

IDENTIFY AND VALIDATE GROWING PERSONNEL NEEDS

For Baldwin, having access to the application usage data of staff and students has shed light on the need for additional personnel to support their growing software integrations. **"Since COVID, our district has spent millions on curriculum products,"** said Coffman. **"There was an assumption that IT was going to support those investments, but we were not part of the initial conversation when they were purchased. Staff started calling our help desk for support on those tools. The help desk would triage the most frequent questions, but then they would have to send them onto our curriculum team. The curriculum team quickly became inundated and reached back out to our department for help, and we currently don't have the resources to support them. However, going into next year, I think I'm going to be able to hire five new**

additional team members to correct this issue because of the insights we've gleaned from CatchOn's data regarding the need for additional professional support."

TRACKING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

In January 2021, Baldwin went fully remote for one week. During that time, Baldwin's leadership team used CatchOn to monitor student engagement and track and assess the effectiveness of its one-to-one initiative. **"For the first time, I could actually see our one-to-one working the way it is designed to work,"** said Coffman. **"Instead of the devices solely being used for assessments and testing, students and staff were using their EdTech tools and devices for educational and curriculum purposes. We had 27,000 kids online, and I was able to see how active and engaged they were through CatchOn."**

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

In addition to tracking their ROI on instructional tools, Baldwin has adopted a holistic ROI strategy that includes tracking application usage data for business and software tools as well. **"We have created dashboards for almost all of our administrative team members, including HR, business, and finance,"** said Coffman. **"That is where some of our largest software purchases are made, so one of my primary focuses is gaining more insight into usage patterns on the administrative side."**

Key Insights and Next Steps

Baldwin's data journey and the gains they have made in a relatively short period of time are certainly impressive. Looking ahead, the district intends to dig deeper into usage and identify what tools are being used and which are not. **"I think we are just scratching the surface about understanding and supporting applications in education,"** said Coffman. **"I would like to remove a lot of duplications and inefficiencies. We also want to identify potential software risks and create a vetting process for our teachers that gives them enough flexibility to be innovative but does not compromise student data."**
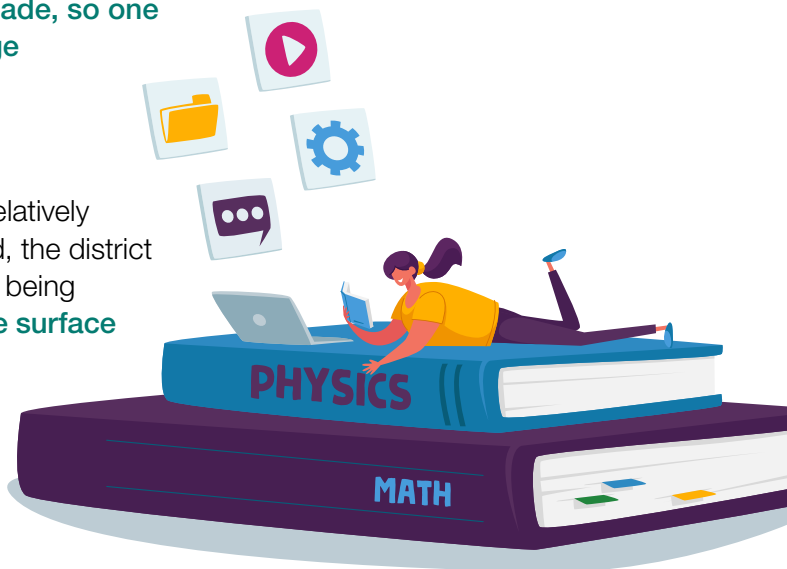
Register for the entire Digital Promise and CatchOn report to discover the innovative best practices and data findings that emerged from the other participating school districts at:

www.catchon.com/digital-promise-report/

About Digital Promise and CatchOn

Digital Promise works at the intersection of education leaders, researchers, and technology developers to improve learning opportunities for all and close the Digital Learning Gap. Because when all learners have equitable access to technology, when everyone participates, and when everyone learns, we all benefit from a more engaged, informed and just society.

For more information, visit digitalpromise.org

CatchOn's actionable data gives administrative leaders the holistic view they need to immediately identify critical patterns of digital engagement at the district, school, class, and student levels and gain insight into the efficacy of their technology investments and integrations.

To see CatchOn in action, visit catchon.com/demo.