



219 North Main Street, Suite 402
Barre, VT 05641 (p) 802-479-1030 | (f) 802-479-1835

MEMORANDUM

TO: Business Managers
COPY: Superintendents
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education
SUBJECT: Status Update - SSDDMS
DATE: April 16, 2019

DMF

We would like to provide an update on the status of the SSDDMS and with Emily Byrne's departure from the AOE, share the plan for transitioning leadership of the project. Going forward, I will step in to fill the role of project sponsor for the SSDDMS, either indefinitely or until a new CFO is hired. I look forward to working with VASBO and VSHARP to move this critical project forward.

Regarding the implementation of the project, I would like to provide an update on several changes and improvements, including legislative requirements, contract updates, and project progress.

Legislative update:

The legislature added language in the FY 2019 Budget Adjustment Act to move the deadline of the UCOA to July 1, 2020. This gives all LEAs an additional year to fully implement the new chart. I anticipate that this language will be approved by the legislature, however for a few complicated political reasons, the entire FY 2019 budget adjustment bill is currently stalled in the legislative approval process. The AOE will let you know when this language has been approved by both the House and Senate and the bill signed by the governor. Depending on whether or not the language passes, the Statbook data collection will look a bit different. With a delay, the AOE will still collect Statbook data in the FY20 format but understands that many SUs/Districts will not be able to comprehensively report according to the full UCOA (i.e. may not be able to break out details by location codes, granularity of "required" codes may not be possible). If the language does not pass, AOE will work with those LEAs not on eFinancePLUS to get their data as close to the new UCOA as possible for the FY20 Statbook data collection, if your system has not fully implemented the new UCOA due to the legislative uncertainty.

Additionally, the House is working on adding language to the Miscellaneous Education Bill to allow any districts that were subject to a mandatory merger by the State Board as part of Act 46, a one-year delay in the implementation of SSDDMS. This language would give districts that were subject to mergers the option to delay go-live until July 1, 2021. This language will still need to be reviewed by the Senate. The likelihood of its final adoption by the General Assembly will not be known until the bill is finalized.

Once this language is or is not adopted by the legislature, there is not likely going to be another opportunity for deferment or delay in implementation. The Agency is currently looking at what the consequence will be for LEAs failing to go live. When LEAs sign up and then defer implementation, there is a financial impact to PowerSchool due to the rework and overstaffing of consultants. At this time PowerSchool has not requested to recoup any of the lost revenue associated with time worked for LEAs that have decided not to go through with implementation after starting the process. AOE anticipates that going forward, when an LEA decides to defer after beginning implementation, PowerSchool will seek funding to cover the associated costs. AOE will be investigating how best to fund the additional contractual obligations.

Current Implementation update:

As a result of the survey issued in February, the AOE has taken some steps to improve the implementation process.

1. Many LEAs were concerned about the short timeline for implementation, especially those merging. As a result, we requested a change in the language around the implementation of the UCOA and provided LEAs an opportunity to change their implementation date to align with a more workable timeline.
2. AOE has received several requests for full features and functionality at go-live. AOE has worked with PowerSchool to add all Edge Apps into R4 schedules. We will be reaching out the R1A and R2 groups to plan the implementation in those systems.
3. We have heard continued LEA concern about adequate onsite support and training and agree that an increased level of support is necessary to make this project successful. PowerSchool has provided additional consultant support and at the end of the month will provide an additional proposal, for more onsite and individual SU/SD dedicated support.
4. Regarding round 4 implementation, weekly meetings have been established between the AOE and the Round 4A/B Leads to help address current implementation challenges that cut across the whole group. These groups are also heavily engaged in the review of modification requests or vet configuration options to ensure that the system is standard across LEAs where possible. Some other small changes that we have instituted that have a big impact include: Published the issues log so that everyone knows if an issue has already been addressed or is being worked on; established weekly meetings to discuss business process improvements using eFinancePLUS; and received improved 5-10-minute videos that are topic-specific and easier to digest.

Improvements in the Works

AOE is working with PowerSchool on several additional improvements to the contract.

- PowerSchool has agreed to extend the unlimited data conversion support for an additional year, through July 1, 2020.
- The hosting infrastructure will no longer be shared with other states. This will likely result in improved performance.
- PowerSchool is working on a schedule to upgrade the Vermont system from v.5.2 to v19.4 this fall. The benefits of this upgrade include:
 - Fix latency issue with redirecting printing of checks

- Improve Central Management of UCOA and Business Rules
- Automatically create POs from requisitions

The Agency has put out a bid for work on the Handbook for Financial Accounting of Vermont School Systems (Handbook II). Bids will be returned to the Agency on April 15th, the goal start date is May 1. The goal is to have the Handbook II completed by October 1. The Vendor and the AOE will be working with the Handbook II committee to complete this important piece of work.

Challenges yet to overcome

While progress on implementation continues to move forward there are still some challenges. For example, we still need to work through a process to provide a better mechanism to address changes to the system and a way to engage a broader audience. Currently we are working with the Round 4 leads for this purpose.

Finally, the use of project code is not yet finalized. This is a top priority for the AOE and we are actively working with PowerSchool to ensure that there is a link between project budget information and the general ledger for reporting. There are several solutions on the table currently and we are working to evaluate the pros and cons of each. We will keep you apprised of progress as this moves forward.