School District of Lancaster Discovers New Gains Using 5Sight™ and 5Cast™ – Receives Over $1M Subsidy Reimbursement

THE SITUATION

A diverse and enthusiastic culture, School District of Lancaster, (SDoL), prides itself on setting high performance standards among the staff and students. "Together We Can" is not only this school's mantra, but a mission statement supported by key initiatives and goals. However, like many other school districts, they are challenged to manage the time intensive and complex task of calculating and reporting the district's transportation costs.

Organization Type:
PK-12 public school

Enrollment:
11,336

Annual Operating Budget:
$210,000,000

School District of Lancaster is a large, urban school district located in central Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Established in 1836, it is the oldest school district in the state. This district serves a diverse population of 11,366 students across 19 different schools. Lancaster offers over 30 International Baccalaureate/Advanced Placement courses. Fun Fact: Over 38 languages are spoken among the student population.

In February of 2017, Matthew Przywara, Chief Financial and Operations Officer for Lancaster, identified a 25% net increase in the district's transportation cost while preparing the annual financial forecast report in 5Cast™. He ran a query to identify the specific categories applicable to these line items, which showed that transportation costs nearly doubled over the last 8 years. His team was not only determined to identify what caused these costs to increase at such a rate, but to seek opportunities for reimbursement from the Department of Education.

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>
> *Matthew Przywara,*
> *Chief Financial and Operations Officer*

THE SOLUTION

When Matt attended the Forecast5 "Benchmark Transportation" session, presented at the PASBO Annual Conference, he had the opportunity to visually compare Lancaster's transportation data to surrounding peer districts using the analytics platform, 5Sight™. Przywara shares, "I saw my district's data as a nuance. The data is complex and difficult to manage from multiple data sets. With the Transportation Benchmark Study now available in 5Sight, I was eager to return to my district and dive deeper into the issue I identified earlier."

From 2010-2012, the district was receiving .60 cents on the dollar for reimbursable transportation costs in the form of state transportation subsidies. After analyzing the district's current and past year's data within the Benchmark Study, Przywara further discovered that his transportation costs were increasing, with subsidy costs dramatically decreasing by 50% over this time period. This confirmed his suspicion of a cost and revenue issue. Matt commented, "Using 5Sight to analyze my trend data, I learned that in 2011, the subsidy rate was the highest it has ever been. I knew there

was a data point gap." Matt uncovered the bus routes that derive the subsidy reports were calculated using suburban routing rates and regulations, as opposed to urban. This caused several issues:

1) We were missing important cost information in our subsidy reports
2) During a year of retirement transitions, staff were not properly trained in the complex reporting requirements;
3) A change in transportation software in 2014 resulted in improper data setup to generate accurate reports to analyze.

THE RESULTS

Using 5Cast, Matt analyzed his trend data to identify the gap in his budget. Supplementing this analysis with 5Sight, he leveraged the visuals in the Benchmark Study to specifically capture where the discrepancy was taking place. The output allowed Lancaster to receive upwards of 1 million dollars in subsidy reimbursement from the Department of

Education. This additional opportunity will benefit and improve the district in such ways that include:

- Allowing money to be allocated to other strategic and operational needs
- Developing and implementing a three-step process to better prepare and review reporting
- Enhancing professional development programs for teachers and staff

Przywara says, "With Forecast5, I have the ability to identify positives and negatives of the budget faster. I may have continued to miss this issue if it was not for 5Cast and 5Sight. This discovery has saved my district millions."

School District of Lancaster continues to leverage data analytics to gain the insights needed to make confident decisions. 5Cast and 5Sight are integral tools in supporting their district's operational and strategic needs. The data discovery and analysis performed demonstrates the power of a culture founded on the principle of teamwork.

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