

October 31, 2024

The Honorable Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Ave.
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath:

I am writing to express our concerns regarding the ongoing transition to the Ed-Fi data exchange system. Cypress-Fairbanks ISD (CFISD) is a large district (3rd largest in Texas) with an abundance of data. We anticipated challenges with the migration to a new system and appreciate the collaborative efforts between the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and our vendor, PowerSchool, to find solutions and ensure a successful implementation. Although CFISD understands the necessity of this transition, the current obstacles have diminished our confidence in meeting the reporting obligations that directly impact our funding and accountability.

CFISD has committed additional staff and spent more than \$50,000 on programming and hardware. We have communicated transparently with both TEA and PowerSchool. After contacting Melody Parrish, TEA has joined several discussions and made plans to attend future calls. The collaboration has been productive. The most pressing issues include:

- **Data loss during publishing**

- For example, on October 16, 2024, we discovered 11,851 eighth-grade students were missing in the system, despite confirmation that all 11,961 eighth graders were in PowerSchool Data Exchange (DEX) and had been previously published in the Texas Student Data System (TSDS) data mart.
- The lack of error messages when data is lost raises concerns about the completeness and reliability of our data submissions. This transparency deficiency makes identifying and rectifying these errors extremely challenging.

- **Inconsistent and slow publishing speeds**

- The inconsistency in publishing speeds creates uncertainty in our workflow and jeopardizes our ability to adhere to reporting deadlines.

- **Inability to monitor data movement throughout the system**

- **Confusion over which entity (TEA or PowerSchool) to submit trouble tickets**

On October 30, 2024, during our group call, we learned that a fatal error we encountered was on the TEA's list of known errors that will be shared with all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) soon. Without this information, we would have spent significant time troubleshooting within our own systems before determining whether to contact TEA or our vendor.

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These issues, combined with the unpredictable system performance, create substantial challenges in meeting our reporting deadlines.

We have heard that all other vendor products used by districts in the state of Texas are experiencing similar issues and note that TEA staff have acknowledged and reported the concerns and issues (<https://www.texastribune.org/2024/09/10/texas-education-data-reporting-school-districts-tea/>).

Unlike the previous linear system for reporting our data, the complexity of the new system, coupled with the additional state requirements and our inability to submit our data and ensure errors are addressed quickly, is compromising the data submitted. We understand that districts that piloted the new system have experienced problems throughout the process, and those have not been fully resolved.


Why is this so important? As you know, data submissions drive accountability and funding in our state. Bad data leads to false accountability results and lost state aid.

As a large district with a significant amount of data to process, CFISD needs a reliable and stable system to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of our submissions. We are now less than 30 days away from our internal deadline for a "fatal free" file, which will be reviewed by all CFISD stakeholders. Typically, at this point in the process, we would focus on verifying data quality. However, we are still in the midst of troubleshooting problems. While we hope to continue collaborating to guarantee accurate and timely data reporting, it is crucial to discuss the core challenge. Data quality has been adversely affected through this transition.

If data quality cannot be definitively produced within the Fall 2024 submission timeline, we request that an extension and future collection adjustments be considered. We would also like to initiate discussions on how "hold harmless" provisions could be applied to funding and accountability.

Thank you for your attention to these ongoing concerns.

Respectfully,



Douglas Killian, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools