

CASE STUDY: KENTUCKY STATE PROJECT



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DeDe Conner

*Director, Enterprise Data Division
Kentucky Department of Education*

How Grassroots Effort Spurred Statewide Automation, Integration, and Student Success with eTranscripts

It took a village of sorts to successfully roll out Parchment’s electronic transcript solution to a diverse group of students, guidance counselors, and academic institutions statewide. What’s more, this record-breaking implementation completed right on schedule.

Now high school students in Kentucky have a simple and secure way to send their transcripts to participating colleges and universities at no cost with Parchment Send fully integrated with Infinite Campus, the state’s secondary student information system (SIS). State postsecondary schools use Parchment Receive to download and process transcript requests.

The brainchild of Kentucky’s Department of Education (KDE) Director DeDe Conner, the statewide eTranscript initiative is a joint project of the KDE, Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), and Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA). “This project is near and dear to my heart,” Conner says. “As we looked at the process for adopting Parchment, we really looked at this as statewide initiative from the very beginning.”

From Abstract to Personal

When Conner was about four months into her position at KDE, she happened to

attend a Parchment training presentation with several Kentucky High schools where a discussion of electronic transcripts generated a lot of interest. “Looking at the enthusiasm I saw there, I felt that this solution was very desirable and made more sense to do statewide rather than district by district,” she explains.

Even though it made sense, the project wasn’t something the KDE moved forward on immediately, until it became personal for Conner. “It took a little time to get going,” she says. “Honestly, we had a lot going on. Then, my daughter was doing transcripts, and I found that the process for her was really the same as it was for me 30 years ago.”

Conner talked with KDE CIO David Couch, who just happened to be experiencing the same thing with his son, who was graduating the same year. “An eTranscript solution really just made sense, so it was an easy sell here in Kentucky,” she explains. “I recommended we explore the solution offered by Parchment through Infinite Campus, and I got the go ahead. It aligned with but still wasn’t one of our priorities, so it was taken on by just a few of us in the KDE.”

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Grassroots Effort

Conner had always known that she would need support to make the project happen. “Just because a couple of us thought it was a good idea wasn’t enough to go full-steam ahead. We needed to know if other Kentucky education agencies would be onboard, especially the postsecondary agencies. Getting everyone to see the benefits and make the necessary changes was an important part of this project. While the reaction from the high schools who participated in the original discussion with Parchment made me confident that they would be supportive, we didn’t have postsecondary input. So, I picked up the phone and started calling some of the universities.”

Conner began her grassroots effort by talking to those actually handling transcripts the state’s three largest universities to get them interested in the solution and in attending a Parchment webcast about what the product offered and what it could do for Kentucky. As a result, the schools on that call agreed to participate in the pilot. They were very enthusiastic and wanted to move forward.

After those conversations with the postsecondaries and talking to additional high schools, Conner came up with list of pros and cons for all possible solutions: the existing electronic process, a paper process, and the Parchment process. To facilitate involvement and participation from all the postsecondary schools, she worked with the CPE, who conducted the outreach.

Selling Point: Common Transcript

The KDE held a series of webcasts to get all schools involved and interested. “We heard from postsecondary schools that they were not ready for a fully electronic process because they would need programming resources. So, we had to make sure we had something in it for them. Having a common transcript became the selling point. Although, we had one SIS across the state with Infinite Classroom, there were 173 different transcripts. Some districts had more than one, even in a single school. For the postsecondary schools, this made it difficult to find the information they needed.

The process began by comparing transcripts at 15 pilot high schools. Although, the schools were of a variety of sizes and geographical locations, there were a lot of similarities. KDE went back and forth between high schools and postsecondary schools, ultimately coming up with a common transcript that met all their needs. “At this point, we only have two optional fields: class rank and ACT scores,” explains Conner. “Other than that, everything is the same statewide. The postsecondary schools are already seeing the benefit of having a standard transcript and are looking forward to the additional efficiencies that a fully paperless process will bring.”

BY THE NUMBERS

173
School Districts

400
Public High Schools

44
Colleges & Universities

1
Student Information System: Infinite Campus

1
Standard Transcript Format Statewide

15,000+
eTranscripts Processed in 9 months

Learn More
exchange.parchment.com

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Starting a Project: Four Questions

According to Conner, there are four questions to ask when starting a project:

- Can we?
- Should we?
- How much?
- Who pays?

“We knew we could do it, the project made sense, and we knew how much it was going to cost,” says Conner. “To answer the fourth question, I had to go with my hand out.”

While Kentucky could always fall back to a student-paid model, Conner was hoping to find state funding from the three participating state agencies. The disadvantage of working at grassroots level is that it’s hard to get anyone to say yes to money, so she went to KDE Commissioner of Education Terry Holliday, who pulled the agencies together for discussions. Ultimately,

they agreed to split costs three ways for five years.

Seamless Process for Student Success

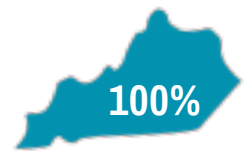
Because post-secondary schools weren’t ready for complete automation with XML files, the state selected Parchment Receive Basic for their part of the process. This solution was easier to sell because of the lower cost model and because Parchment is integrated with Infinite Campus. The contract covers both public and private schools, and there’s a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the three agencies. The KHEAA covers the cost for the private schools.

Today, Kentucky high school students have a seamless process for delivering and tracking transcripts. They can send transcripts to any institution that uses Parchment for free, and all state colleges and universities participate.

KEY WINS for KENTUCKY



SINGLE TRANSCRIPT FORMAT



100% STATEWIDE PARTICIPATION



POSTSECONDARY PREFERS eTRANSCRIPTS



ABOUT KENTUCKY ETRANSCRIPT

- **KDE:** Kentucky Department of Education
- **CPE:** Council on Postsecondary Education
- **KHEAA:** Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority

More About Parchment Send & Receive

PARCHMENT SEND

- Simple online student ordering and tracking system
- Upload and send transcripts to every destination in one step
- Secure e-commerce platform to collect payment (if desired)
- Analytics and dashboard for at-a-glance reporting

PARCHMENT RECEIVE

- Students notifications when transcripts are received and downloaded
- Download and print eTranscripts as a single file
- Filter and store documents online for as long as you want
- Analytics and dashboard for at-a-glance reporting

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The Project Plan



“I have public universities still thanking me for making this happen. They are really seeing the difference it’s making in their offices.”

DeDe Conner

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Getting Started

After attending the webinar in the fall of 2011, Conner began reaching out in June 2012 to see if the eTranscript project was something of interest. Late in 2012, the KDE kicked off the project and got commitment from the three agencies for funding. At that point, the state was ready to start implementation.

“It was important to have the universities and colleges onboard before the high schools,” she explains. “We had to ensure that the postsecondaries were going to accept the common transcript and automated process so the high schools would have a single solution. We had 100 percent participation of the Kentucky postsecondary schools by the time we went live on July 1, 2013, which really helped get high schools willing to sign up and go live.”

According to Conner, they expected to be ready for the high school pilot in early 2013. However, developing the common transcript took little more time than anticipated. “Because Kentucky took some approaches different than those of other states, we had to make changes within Infinite Campus and Parchment. While the process went pretty smoothly, we just had to make sure we made and tested the changes.”

The high school pilot took place in the spring of 2013, providing an opportunity

to create best practices and documentation. Districts have a registration portal where they could select the month they wanted to go live, from July 2013 through March 2014.

Training: Mostly Online Model

And what about training? “We’ve been able to transition very smoothly without having to do lot of boots-on-the-ground training,” says Conner. For the initial July rollout for Jefferson County, the state’s biggest school district, Parchment provided two days of onsite training for guidance counselors. “With that exception, the training has been online. Parchment reached out to all of the districts on our behalf and scheduled training for counselors. It takes about an hour and is not a difficult process. We got great feedback from training sessions.”

To train students, Parchment made posters and training materials available directly to schools. “It was simply a matter of getting students together to say, ‘All you need to do is click on this link.’ It’s so simple that there didn’t have to be a lot of training,” Conner says.

See Training Examples



exchange.parchment.com/toolkit

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The Student Experience

For students, the eTranscript process is very simple, whether they are still in school or already graduates. The whole process is student initiated and available 24/7 with Parchment Send, accessed from Infinite Classroom. Students go online, register, log in, select the high school they are attending or have graduated from, provide consent, and indicate the colleges and universities to receive the transcript.

The solution eliminates scheduling time in counselor's office, standing in line for transcripts, and losing transcripts. Students can track transcripts online from the time requested to the time delivered at the college or university. They also get email updates.

The High School Administrator Experience

Guidance counselors can see all pending transcript requests and choose to approve them individually or all at once. They can also put transcripts on hold, if grades still have to be posted or students have fines to pay. Students are notified as the school releases the transcripts. When counselors log into Infinite Classroom, access Parchment Send, and choose the transcripts to release, an XML file is generated and sent to Parchment in real time. Schools have the option to add documents, such as letters of reference.

Once the school releases the transcripts, counselors can go to Parchment to track progress with an online dashboard.

Administrators like “the simplicity and that they can do it on their own schedule, rather than having kids coming in and out,” Conner says. “That gives them more time to spend with students who need guidance.”

The Postsecondary School Experience

According to Conner, the downside of the previous eTranscript solution was that postsecondaries had to download transcript by transcript. With Parchment Receive, the schools can just batch and download all transcripts at once in the same format, making them much easier to work with when putting into the system. And because students can track their transcripts online, the colleges receive fewer phone calls.

“While our colleges and universities see the benefits of going to fully automated solution, they need to get programming resources assigned to them to make that happen,” explains Conner. “Going to a PDF file format was a very attractive interim step. I have eight public universities still thanking me for making this happen. They are already seeing the difference it's making in their offices.”



TIMELINE

2011

November

- First introduced

2012

June

- Gauging Interest

October

- Funding secured
- Project kicks off

2013

January

- Implementation begins
- Development of Common Transcript
- On-boarding of postsecondary

April

- HS Pilot begins
- Producing documentation and Best Practices

July

- High School implementation schedule sign-up open
- 100% of Postsecondary Institutions live

2014

March

- 100% of High Schools implemented