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Alma Empowers School Districts to Give Students More Choice

New features in unified student information and learning management platform provides scheduling and attendance flexibility to foster personalized learning

PORTLAND, Ore. (Nov. 14, 2016) – The school schedule poses one of most significant challenges for school districts transitioning to progressive educational approaches and personalized learning. In a personalized learning environment, students benefit from daily or weekly choice in how and where they spend their learning time.

To provide greater ease and flexibility for districts seeking to make changes, Alma Technologies, Inc. today announces the Personalized Learning Scheduling Tool, a new feature available in its intuitive, integrated student information system (SIS) and learning management system (LMS). Alma is the first SIS to offer ad-hoc scheduling for K-12 schools and districts.

Unlike other scheduling software, Alma gives schools and districts the flexibility to have students' choose what they want to learn as often as daily while maintaining attendance and performance tracking. The Personalized Learning Scheduling Tool enables schools to designate a specific portion of the day or bell schedule for student choice, and then offer students a set of classes and programs from which to choose to attend. New rosters are created in real-time so teachers can track attendance as usual. Administrators have the opportunity to routinely offer student choice throughout the school year—daily, weekly or for any period of time they deem appropriate – rather than just on a semester or yearly basis as is typical in school schedules. This level of flexibility empowers school and district leaders to offer a greater variety and depth of learning opportunities based on students' interests and educational needs during the school day—such as offering mindfulness training, a robotics program, or additional time with core curriculum.

According to a 2014 report by Hanover Research, studies show that giving students choice, a foundation for personalized learning, increases their engagement, sense of well-being and academic performance. Educators and administrators are increasingly working to incorporate more student autonomy into learning and move student-centered learning forward in their schools and districts. However, trying to re-engineer the bell schedule to embrace greater student choice over what and when they learn can be a logistical nightmare without the right technology tools. Education leaders often have to resort to spreadsheets or an amalgamation of software to create the solution they need.

"We were inspired by a lighthouse school district to build our personalized learning scheduling tool to enable every district to create ad-hoc schedules that embrace student choice and still track attendance and performance," said Andrew Herman, CEO and Co-Founder of Alma. "Technology should not be an impediment to change; it should support innovative education leaders and teachers in pursuing progress."

"My job as IT director is to make the jobs of teachers and district staff easier not only in meeting their needs today but also aligned to our future goals, and Alma has enabled this beyond my expectations," said Sam Mormando, director of technology for Garnet Valley School District. "Alma has helped us smooth the way toward personalized learning as we've strived to give students more voice and choice in everything from the devices they use to the enhancement periods they enroll in."

Augmenting this new tool, Alma has also added new scheduling and attendance tracking features for outside the normal bell schedule. School staff can now track attendance for all extracurricular activities, athletic programs, after-school programs, detention, and academic interventions. These new features ensure administrators know in real-time where their students are at all times during and after the school day when in enrolled in school-sponsored activities, enhancing their ability to respond in emergency situations as well as access critical data needed to inform programming decisions.

About Alma Technologies, Inc.
Alma is committed to transforming K-12 data into insight. Supplanting traditional student information and learning management systems with a modern platform, Alma unites student and learning data into an integrated, intuitive experience that empowers educators with increased visibility for data-driven decisions. The modern design positions schools for progressive education strategies and models, while simultaneously recovering lost time and expense spread across multiple, disparate vendors.

Alma provides a flexible, scalable solution that can work for any school and any budget. To learn more about Alma and its features, or to request a demo, visit www.GetAlma.com or contact @GetAlma.

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