How Wisconsin Improved Outcomes for Students and 21CCLC Federal Reporting Operations

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Associate Professor of Psychology and Director of the Consortium of Applied Research at the University of Wisconsin—Green Bay

When Dr. Jenell Holstead, Associate Professor of Psychology and Director of the Consortium of Applied Research at the University of Wisconsin—Green Bay, was contacted by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to run the statewide evaluation for the state in 2017, she knew she had her work cut out for her. With the COVID-19 pandemic, new Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measure changes, and a growing number of sites (~10% Y/OY), she needed a system to keep her team and sites organized.

In this case study, Dr. Holstead shares how she and her small team of two graduate students use TransACT's AfterSchool21 (AS21) software to manage nearly 155 sites, the GPRA measure changes, and new 21APR requirements.

The Three Biggest Concerns Regarding the New GPRA Measures

When the new GPRA measures first rolled out, Dr. Holstead's primary concern "was the pandemic and the schools we work with revealing that they wouldn't have data altogether." According to Dr. Holstead, the new GPRA measures were lofty and Wisconsin had historically been relying on teacher surveys for their data.

Prior to 2021-2022, states could choose from three different outcome measures:

- Standardized test scores
- Report card grades
- Teacher surveys

States could submit all three but the United States Department of Education (USED) only required them to report on one. So, Wisconsin went from a single outcome measure to now having six of them.

Dr. Holstead's second concern was the addition of four to five brand-new GPRA measures and the requesting of academic data that her team had never asked the sites to gather before. And lastly, her third concern was "that it was not just one school year's worth of data; it was two years (2021 and 2022) that all the sites needed to have, which makes it much more complicated coming off the stress from the pandemic."

TransACT Pro-Actively Supported States Through GPRA Changes with Training and Collaboration

"They [TransACT] were amazing," Dr. Holstead states. "I always knew that there were options within the system to have all of this data in there, but they really rose to the challenge, very quickly adapting their system to make sure it met the new federal requirements and that we had two years of data within that one time span."

Dr. Holstead claims that the system was very user friendly, so that "we could ensure that all the sites could get in there with just a few clicks to input the information. TransACT was always on top of it and knew what the new requirements were and how they would meet them. TransACT did a really amazing job making sure that we always felt like we were in good hands."

The AfterSchool21 team includes former federal programs directors, and a technical team that holds relationships at the federal level, so the product is updated in advance of critical changes in policy.

AS21: The Evaluator's "Dream" Reporting Tool

At first, Dr. Holstead and her team were told by DPI that they would need the state student ID number to be in the AS21 system. As a result, they began working with the sites to secure the ID number, which had always been an option to enter into AS21. Unfortunately, the DPI determined that that was insufficient and requested several other demographic factors.

Once Dr. Holstead discovered exactly what the DPI needed, she emailed a rep at TransACT and said, "Here are the data points that I need. Can you create a file?" And "within a day, the data was sent to me," Dr. Holstead says. "I then sent it to DPI and DPI—they typically take a couple of weeks to download the data—sent it back and then we uploaded it seamlessly."

The "dream report" has everything statewide administrators need to evaluate a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) program in a single file. In total, there are over 600 out-of-the-box reports available in the AS21 system.

Simple Certification of Results, Automatic Push into 21APR

Since 2017, Dr. Holstead requires that all the sites certify their data in AS21. "They enter the system, lock their data, review it, and ensure it's good to go. Then my team logs into the AS21 system. We have several things that we're looking for that the state requires." Dr. Holstead and her team verify that all the sites have the necessary information in AS21, **asking questions such as:**

- Do they have partner data in the data system?
- Are they reporting their free and reduced lunch numbers?
- Do they have multiple activities or offerings that they're putting in?

Dr. Holstead adds that, "When I get confirmation that the data is in the system, we go in and do a site-level check to ensure everything is accurate. Once we feel everyone in the state is good, I tell TransACT to go ahead and push the data to 21APR."

TransACT has always been a strong partner in coordinating between sites and the federal system to ensure data submission is smooth. Having the API automatically transmit data from AfterSchool21 into 21APR has simplified the process.

Using AS21 to Monitor and Measure Program Performance as an Evaluator

"Essentially, we give DPI updates on how sites perform and what they do on a monthly basis," Dr. Holstead states. "Around mid-October or early November, if a site hasn't been using the AS21 system or has very few days of operation, we reach out to them and make sure the information is accurate." If it is, then her team provides the accurate information to the DPI, which then follows up with the sites.

Dr. Holstead also uses AS21 in other areas. For example, the state of Wisconsin has specific rules about what counts towards academic enrichment. Dr. Holstead helps sites code the information in AS21 so that when her team reviews the information, **they can quickly see which sites are meeting grant expectations** and the state requirement of ten hours per week.

> New reporting and data features requested by customers are made available to all other customers after development. As a result, AS21 has the largest number of out-of-the-box reporting capabilities in the market, meaning if a program, state, or local education agency wants to see data or collect data in a certain way, it's likely already available in the system, eliminating costly custom development fees.

TransACT's AS21 Team Supported State Departments of Education Through GPRA Measures

"There have been webinars or calls where we get to hear how the other states are using the AS21 system," Dr. Holstead states. TransACT has been "really wonderful" in recommending what other states are doing with the system, like turning a feature on or off.

Federal policy often clarifies the "what" but leaves a lot of interpretation for "how." In schools and after-school programs, building net-new data systems from scratch can be daunting. The AfterSchool21 team designed the system to allow administrators to configure how the software calculates improvement on each of the GPRA measures. So, it can align with the "small p" policy decisions that each state makes.

Prior to AS21, Sub-Grantees and DPI Had to Manually Calculate Thousands of Data Points

Dr. Holstead claims that if everyone tracked the outcomes data using their own Excel files or spreadsheets, it would have been a "hot mess" and "haphazard". "The wonderful thing about AS21 is that you just put the data points in there and it will calculate it for you," Dr. Holstead claims. **AS21 tells you which kids you need to have data points for, such as:**

- GPA for grade levels

- Data points for the past two years

- Participants status (improving, decreasing, etc.)

"Having sites calculate that independently would have created a lot of user errors," Dr. Holstead states. "It wouldn't have been very accurate information and it would have been much more stressful for the sites to do that unassisted."

Issues with Collecting and Reporting Accurate Data

According to Dr. Holstead, most of the sites have gotten the data and entered it without expressing concern. However, some of the sites are still struggling to find the data. They simply don't know who to contact at their school or they'll hit a dead end when the school claims that they can't share the information they need.

In 2021, Dr. Holstead and her team went through the process of preemptively getting a data-sharing agreement with each site so that **if turnover happens in the school, they can come back to it and say:**
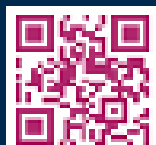
- This is a grant requirement

- It's a stipulation of your award

- We already have this data sharing agreement in place

- It's through Institutional Review Board approval

- TransACT also has one with us that we can't share

> AfterSchool21 includes layers of data auditing, in-app user support, and multiple import pathways to make collection and reconciliation simple, fast, and accurate.

Performing Checks on the Imported Outcomes Data

As a state, Dr. Holstead and her team decided to require that all the GPRA measure outcomes are due in early October, knowing they wouldn't be due until February. However, they anticipated that sites might have some difficulty. "So basically, since October 3rd," Dr. Holstead begins, "AS21 has been pulling weekly reports that tell us how many kids have data points for school day attendance, GPA, and suspensions for each year."

Her team can then figure out where the discrepancies are and who they need to work with to resolve them. For instance, one site put 2021 and 2022 data in the 1920 school year. So, when they pulled the reports, they could instantly see what was happening, course correct, and transfer the data into the appropriate year. "We only have about nine sites or so left that we are still working with to get the data in so that we can reach our state goal of having at least 65% of the data entered," says Dr. Holstead. "We do all the data checks and training of AS21 to ensure the sites know how to use the system."

Schedule a live tour with us and discover why thousands of out-of-school time programs choose AfterSchool21 to manage their reporting.