CASE STUDY · CHILLICOTHE R-II SCHOOL DISTRICT

Keeping K-12 Leadership Focused on People, Culture, and Community

Superintendent Dan Wiebers uses Lebra to improve communication, reduce administrative burdens, and make more informed strategic decisions in the Chillicothe R-II School District

DISTRICT	LOCATION	PRODUCTS	PUBLISHED
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Located in north-central Missouri, the Chillicothe R-II School District serves approximately 1,700 K-12 students, along with preschool learners and students attending the district's career and technical education programs. Including its Grand River Technical School and adult learners, nearly 2,000 students pass through district buildings each day.

Emphasizing future readiness

Superintendent Dr. Dan Wiebers, now in his 27th year in public education and his eighth year leading the district, says one of the school system's priorities is to prepare students not just for graduation, but for successful futures in the local community. "We're not training kids to leave high school to take a test," he says. "We want them to be ready for life and the workforce, and we want them to stay in our local community here in Chillicothe."

Located in a community of roughly 10,000 residents, Chillicothe serves as a regional hub for agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, and commerce. District leaders have worked closely with local employers to ensure students can see clear connections between classroom learning and future careers.

"Our focus right now is on real-world learning and how we can get students prepared not only to learn the standards in their classes, but also how their learning translates into career success," Wiebers says. "This has also positively impacted academic achievement, which has been improving at the same time. We're now in the top 8 percent of districts in the state of Missouri for academic performance."

The district has developed partnerships with businesses, utilities, healthcare organizations, and community leaders to ensure connection between education and the needs of local industries. Chillicothe students regularly explore career pathways, internships, and hands-on projects that expose them to jobs available right in their region.


Dan Wiebers

"We're setting up opportunities where our students can have experience working in those industries or businesses here in town so that they get their foot in the door," Wiebers says. "Instead of trying to move somewhere else to do the same job, they can stay here."

Building a teacher pipeline

The district has also recently launched a "Grow Your Own" educator pathway through support from the Patterson Family Foundation. Students interested in teaching can begin coursework in high school, earn credentials, continue through local college and university partnerships, and potentially return to teach in Chillicothe classrooms. "Our elementary teachers love it because older students in this pathway will assist in their classrooms to gain experience. It's going very well," Wiebers says.

Improving communication and a supportive culture

While student readiness is a major focus, Wiebers believes educator engagement and fostering a healthy employee culture is equally important.

With nearly 300 employees across four campuses including a regional technical center, Wiebers says it can be challenging to maintain meaningful connections with staff. When he first heard about a new district communications platform called Lebra, developed by local entrepreneur Matt Wenzel in 2023, he contacted the company to learn more. "I was impressed by

what it could do. We immediately began working with them as one of their first district customers."

One of the first tools Wiebers implemented was Lebra Lead, which helps superintendents and school leaders build stronger relationships with employees by helping to identify important moments such as birthdays, work anniversaries, and milestones, while making thoughtful outreach and recognition more manageable across an entire district.

"Lebra Lead connects to my calendar and reminds me of important milestones, then helps craft email messages I can send to employees. I can maintain connections in a way I wouldn't have been able to otherwise," Wiebers says. "People want to be appreciated for what they do. It's so important to celebrate our teachers and tell them what a good job they're doing. Lebra Lead is a great tool for doing that."

Reducing administrative burdens

Soon, the district implemented another platform, Lebra Ascend, to help modernize portions of its teacher evaluation process. Staff members use the tool to develop professional growth plans, while principals use it to document classroom observations and evaluation feedback.

Wiebers says that in the past, these processes involved extensive paperwork and time-consuming documentation. Today, administrators can record simple observation notes during classroom visits, and the platform uses AI to write out how the teacher meets state and district evaluation standards. Principals still review, edit, and approve all evaluation content, but the process requires significantly less time and manual work.

For school leaders, the time savings have been substantial. "Our principals have so much on their shoulders right now," Wiebers says. "If I can take a little of the burden away so that they aren't doing paperwork in the evenings, or on weekends and holidays, then I'm going to do it. I was a principal for years, and I know how that can be. Lebra Ascend has been very helpful to them and I know they appreciate it a lot."

Making policies more useful and accessible

The district also uses Lebra Organization AI, a tool designed to streamline administrative workflows and improve decision making by creating an AI-powered searchable database of district documentation. "We uploaded all our policies, plans, and handbooks into Org AI," Wiebers says. "Our principals and administrators are able to ask it questions about different scenarios or issues that come up, and the platform immediately replies with what our policy is, makes recommendations, and will even draft relevant communications if needed. That is also a huge time saver."

Forecasting the impact of legislation and finances

A new tool Wiebers says he is looking forward to using is Lebra Impact, which the Missouri Association of School Administrators has recently made available to its members. Lebra Impact is designed to help district leaders quickly and easily understand how any proposed state legislation may affect their school system. "The platform summarizes and describes what would change in your district, positively or negatively, and will then help you draft communications to stakeholders, including lawmakers and school board members, to describe the potential impact and advocate for your schools. I'm very excited to start working with it," Wiebers says.

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And another new tool Wiebers is exploring is Lebra Compass, a budgeting and forecasting platform designed to help districts monitor spending patterns, anticipate financial challenges before they arise, and communicate financial information more clearly to school boards and community members. "It will give us another perspective on our budget so that we can make the right decisions for our students," Wiebers says.

A smart use of AI

Overall, Wiebers says that the tools from Lebra align perfectly with one of his strategic leadership goals: helping educators spend more time focused on people.

"Large school districts have teams and departments dedicated to communications, policies and compliance, budgeting and finance, or data analysis," Wiebers says. "But in a smaller district like Chillicothe, we don't have that kind of manpower. We must be very efficient. I don't want our principals or administrators mired in paperwork and administrative tasks. They need to be focused on our students, our educators, and our community."

"Lebra's tools let us use the power of AI in a smart way. They improve efficiency and help us do our jobs, while still maintaining human connection and authenticity."

To learn more, go to www.lebrahq.com

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