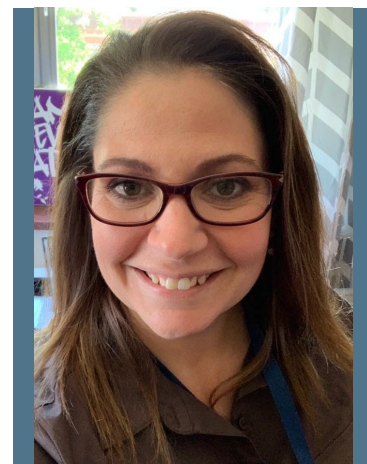E lgin Area School District U-46 serves families in 11 communities, across 90 square miles, within Chicago's northwest suburbs. More than 38,000 Early Childhood through 12th grade students are served by 57 schools and programs in this district. Additionally, the student population speaks 103 different home languages and more than half of the students are from Hispanic families.

With a large student population, the ability to ensure IEP compliance and maintain student files, is imperative. However, this was a problem that Elgin was facing with their previous IEP vendor. As a continuously open system, it did not provide the option to lock historical documents, so any IEP was able to be edited by anyone. "It was really difficult for us to ensure compliance and maintain the documents." said Amanda Giacalone, Assistant Director of Specialized Student Services. "There were also no alerts or notifications of errors on the forms, and it did not speak to our SIS (student information system)."

Elgin recognized it was time for a change, but was hesitant about transitioning to a new software. "We knew regardless we needed to change. Our biggest question was would we be able to download and, fairly easily, upload our files to the new system. We could and we did, it went really well!"

As a large district, Elgin also feared that the learning curve would be too great and would cause teachers to spend more of their time trying to navigate a new system, instead of educating their students. However, Elgin felt the implementation was one of the biggest strengths of the entire process! "All of our trainers were amazing, and the staff at Embrace® is so knowledgeable. If you have a question, they always have an answer. [We] never had to wait for the team to get back to us with answers," Amanda excitedly said!

Amanda Giacalone
Special Services Coordinator

Key Facts About Elgin:
- Over 38,000 Early Childhood through 12th grade students
- 57 schools and programs in the district
- 103 Home Languages
- District struggled with ensuring compliance

"We knew regardless we needed to change."

- Amanda Giacalone, Assistant Director of Specialized Student Services

By moving to Embrace® software, Elgin was able to house all of their program needs (IEP, 504, and Medicaid services) in one location and implement SIS integration on a nightly basis. With the transition, they noticed significant changes that benefited their district more than they originally imagined. "We started seeing growth in our goal-writing, more accurate records and reporting, documentation of consent with electronic signatures, maintaining compliance, and rewriting IEPs instead of updating the previous information to make it more meaningful!" Amanda stated.

"Embrace® continuously updates and improves the system. When input is given, it is always heard and considered."

- Amanda Giacalone,

It was important to the district that the system worked efficently for them. Between the organization of the student files, the ability to translate data for their heavy Spanish-speaking community, and the extra safe-guard alerts, the district was able to see the big picture for each student in one location. "With our old system, [student data] was broken up or it was something you had to click on to open a new document. With Embrace®, if you open a student file, you see the running records of all the previous meetings. If I need to reference something, it's really easy," said Amanda. "Additionally, the Embrace® software was user-friendly and customizable, so we could customize not only the forms, but even how the system worked."

Having a great partnership with client districts is crucial to Embrace® to ensure the software fits district needs and can be as successful for clients as possible. "We love how Embrace® continuously updates and improves the system. When input is given, it is always heard and considered, which is always appreciated," Amanda noted. "We would absolutely recommend, not only the product, but the company."

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- Amanda Giacalone, Assistant Director of Specialed Student Services