

**S**ycamore CUSD #427, located in Sycamore, Illinois, was established in 1950. The district covers 80 square miles, with over 3,700 K-12 students in 7 buildings. With a strong motto of “Empower all learners to succeed in their world”, it was important to the Sycamore school district to have a strong IEP software to make that vision a reality.

The district struggled with their previous IEP vendor, an un-intuitive system with a chaotic layout of required paperwork. “I did not find it user-friendly or intuitive on what to do next. I didn’t like the layout of the paperwork. There were too many disjointed pieces that I felt could have been in the same form,” explained Lynn Reilly, Director of Student Services, “I didn’t feel it was friendly to parents, and I like our parents to have a clear understanding of IEP paperwork.”

When reviewing alternative IEP software solutions, Sycamore conducted a study of pros and cons for 5 different companies, and the decision was quickly made. “When we looked at the other systems, they were complicated and cumbersome. Embrace® had all the things I was looking for in a system.” Lynn elaborated. “I felt it was easy to use. We always talk about less clicks, which is super important to a Special Education teacher or related service providers, to get the job done quickly and efficiently and still have a really defendable IEP. Even before the trainings, I could look around and find where everything [for the IEP] was.”

Embrace's training model was another 'pro' for the district, because not only was training comprehensive, but it was also flexible, inclusive, and molded to the users' needs. “We did in-person training across the district, and I joined every training, because we can take the system of Embrace®, but also put in ‘this is how we do it in Sycamore or how we’ve used it in the past.’” Lynn stated, “Embrace® trainers are amazing, allowing me to interject and to explain to my staff what they need to remember about our district.”



**Lynn Reilly**  
*Director of Student Services*

#### **Key Facts About Sycamore:**

- Over 3,700 Students in 7 buildings
- 14% of Student Population Require an IEP
- Special Services Supports Special Needs Students Ages 3-21

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In addition to the initial training, it's important to Embrace® that users continue to get updates and additional training as the school year progresses. "I love all the webinars Embrace® puts together. If anyone needs anything, I can guide staff to what [Embrace® has] already developed for webinars," commented Lynn, "I like all of Embrace®'s tips and tricks. Most of my staff have been teachers or providers for many years, but having the tips and tricks to save more time is the most beneficial."

In addition to ongoing training, Embrace® stays up-to-date with all state and federal changes to IEP regulations. "When everything changed with restraint and seclusion, I felt like Embrace® always kept up with ISBE changes. I barely have to look twice when I know a change is coming. I know within a few days Embrace® has already made the changes to those forms to meet the ISBE rules." praised Lynn. Keeping users informed on these changes is also critical. "I love the home page, that gives all the changes quickly, so I don't have to search through my emails for any changes," Lynn exclaimed.

By providing powerful IEP tools, including form indicators, EmbraceEP® improves district compliance and helps track deadlines. "We're more effective in the way we do our paperwork, it's a pretty intuitive system so you don't miss things. There are checkmarks that are green when things are done and red when something is missing," Lynn described, "If [the staff] label the meeting as an Initial Eval, Reeval, or an Annual Review, the date pops up and there is a reminder that it's coming up."

When asked if she would be comfortable recommending Embrace® to her colleagues, Lynn replied, "Hands down, absolutely! I would, and I do, all the time. Customer service is second to none. Any time I call, or my staff calls, [Embrace® Customer Service] answers immediately...even in this really stressful time, everyone is really nice and helpful, and even if they don't have the answer, they say 'Let me find the answer and get back to you.' and they always do."

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