Alchemer

How ESD 113 Uses Alchemer for Everything from Art Shows to Meeting State Mandates

Like many educational organizations, Educational Service District (ESD) 113 thrives on feedback. The ESD collects feedback from various stakeholders like parents, students, and their own staff in each district from Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, and Thurston counties to make better decisions about how to use their resources.

MANDATED TRANSLATIONS MADE EASY

Creating surveys, polls, and forms in more than one language is a lot of work. Not only do you need to translate the text, but often you need to figure out how to compile and share the results to multiple audiences. In the state of Washington, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) mandates that all school districts must communicate with all parents in a language they can understand.

ESD 113 found that they already had a solution that made this job easier. "I think one of the real benefits that we're finding over other survey or forms software is that Alchemer has the ability to set up the exact same survey in different languages," explains Liz Wuerffel, Communications Director at ESD 113. "We can have the survey translated into Spanish, and then toggle between Spanish and English responses on that same survey platform. The alternative would require creating two different surveys with two banks of results that we would need to merge into a single data set."

"We really love Alchemer. It's become our primary survey tool," claims Liz. "Even when we could use a free option, we opt for Alchemer because we're so used to the way it works, and the way we can send results to Google Sheets through the integration."

PUTTING RESULTS IN THE RIGHT HANDS AUTOMATICALLY

ESD 113 leverages Alchemer's capability to automatically send emails when a survey is completed. "A lot of our programs have referral forms," explains Liz. "So, we love the automatic email notification in Alchemer, which forwards those forms to a particular person." ESD 113 also uses the Google Sheets integration in Alchemer to share results without providing access to the Alchemer source data.

"It's really helpful to have the integration between Alchemer and Google Sheets so people can get real-time information," adds Liz. "If something comes in, program staff see it in Google Sheets about three seconds after it's submitted. This is really powerful because we can still lock down any sensitive information in Alchemer without having to worry. We don't allow them to go into the system to look at the reports, and we don't need to generate a report every day. They can see what they need to see through Google Sheets."

Automatic emails and an integration with Google Sheets saves ESD 113 survey builders time and effort. That way the team can distribute the results immediately into the systems people are already using, and control what data is available to each person reviewing.

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COLLECTING VARIOUS TYPES OF DATA, INCLUDING AN ART SHOW

Every year, ESD 113 runs an art show for the high schools in the five counties. "The art show brings together teachers and students from many different districts that the ESD serves," explains Liz. High school art students can each submit one piece of art for the show, and regional and state judges then select winners. Regional award winners go on to the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for the statewide show. Other awards include a selection from the ESD Board, the People's Choice Award, and Central Washington University Scholarship Awards.

"During COVID, the ESD didn't want to cancel the art show, so they moved judging online. We built a survey for our judges, so they could rank their selections online. The whole show was able to happen virtually," says Liz. "We're able to go back to in-person for jury selection, but we still use Alchemer for the teachers' entries and People's Choice Award."

"Having such a flexible survey platform has allowed us to shift with the needs of our community," explains Liz. "Teachers need a way to submit art-show entries that they and students can use quickly during class or during a passing period. They want to be able to give their students opportunities like this, and Alchemer has made that easier. We have districts that are 50 or 60 miles away that can still participate because they can submit their work online and it's featured in our art show's Flickr album. We can run a quick report and cross-check it with the artwork that teachers drop off for the in-person show. We're a busy team and we know teachers are busy, too. Alchemer has helped us speed up the process, and we appreciate it."

COLLABORATING WITH OTHERS TO KEEP STAFF HAPPY AND ENGAGED

Because Alchemer is so easy to use, ESD 113 Communications team built surveys for other groups. "We collaborated with the School Nurse Corps to build a satisfaction survey with the school districts," says Liz.

The team also uses Alchemer to create staff surveys for Gravity, a district-wide re-engagement effort for students who left school before graduation. Each group can now independently run their surveys and collect the results without impacting the ESD 113 Communications team.

PULLING MANY DISTRICTS TOGETHER

ESD 113 is primarily tasked with internal communications to the 450 people working in the agency and across school districts the five counties, covering almost 6919 square miles (13,483 square kilometers) and a population exceeding 540,000. "Recently we built a referral form for Olympic Academy," Liz explains. The Olympic Academy teaches students with social, emotional, and/or behavioral challenges the skills necessary to achieve greater success in their home schools and in their communities. "Originally, they had two separate Google Forms that school districts would fill out. We merged the two forms into one Alchemer form and included a Google Sheets integration and email notification with PDF." Merging the two forms saved hours of complex work for the team.

Each of these use cases — translations, internal satisfaction, automatic data routing, and an integration with Google Sheets — saves ESD 113 time and effort that can now go into the rest of their important work. "I would say Alchemer definitely helps with efficiency," explains Liz. "None of us are formally trained on Alchemer, so we have learned on the job, usually 20 minutes at a time. It's a robust and secure survey platform that allows us to do more."

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