

Mainframe Modernization Project Update

Updated January 29, 2020

In partnership with Minnesota IT Services (MNIT) and an outside vendor, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is currently in the process of converting all school finance mainframe system applications and databases to a new, more modern language and platforms. This project includes many of the applications used by the School Finance Division to calculate and distribute aids and levies, and process student, transportation and financial data collected from school districts, charter schools and other local education agencies. As most of these 28 systems are interconnected, the goal of this project is to convert them all as a group and retire the old mainframe systems at the end of the transition period.

Background

Planning for this project was in the works for a number of years and began in earnest after the state legislature appropriated funding in 2016. The mainframe system has been in use since the 1970s. It has long been recognized that continued reliance on this outdated infrastructure and code is not sustainable. As current technical staff retire, it becomes increasingly difficult to replace them with employees who have the necessary skill sets. This project is an opportunity to:

- Hire support personnel with current skill sets
- Improve vulnerability and security management
- Reduce the maintenance costs of the overall system
- Provide better integration between these systems and other systems supported by MDE for data collection and other areas.

A contract was signed with the conversion vendor in September 2018. In the following period, the code and databases have been converted, delivered and tested in six iterations. MDE and MNIT are in the final stages of testing and preparing for the transition to the new system.

What to Expect

The goal of the project is to modernize the systems while not changing the school finance reports and services delivered to school districts and others. Once implemented, most of these changes will be in the background and behind the scenes. While the updates affect the work of MDE and MNIT, most of what you see in your work will appear unchanged.

- Minnesota Funding Reports (MFR) will continue to be posted to the MDE website in PDF format. These include Integrated Department of Education Aids System (IDEAS) and aid entitlement reports,

district/school average daily membership (ADM) reports, special education reports and Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS) turnaround reports.

- Secure reports, such as assessment files and Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) student reports, will also continue with the same access and schedule of availability.
- IDEAS payments will be delivered on time by preparing payments in advance to ensure no disruption after the launch.
- Data collections via web applications will not change, but the data will be loaded to the modernized MDE databases and systems.
- Data submission processes are not changing. MDE will work with vendors for specification for UFARS and other submissions.

Update and Timeline of Mainframe Modernization Events

Most agency web application and report systems as well as ClearPath mainframe systems and DataBridge access **will be shut down starting Thursday, February 13, 2020, starting at 5 p.m. until start of business on Tuesday, February 18, 2020**, for the mainframe system conversion. A maintenance webpage will be displayed to users who try to launch any web applications or web reports during this conversion downtime period.

For Internal Agency Users

Services unavailable from Thursday, February 13, 2020, at 5 p.m. until start of business on Tuesday, February 18, 2020:

- Mainframe applications unavailable
- DataBridge access disabled
- Most MDE and Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) web applications disabled, including Special Education Data Reporting Application (SEDRA), Average Daily Membership Web Estimates (ADMWE) and Access to Career Technical Education for Students with a Disability (ACTE-SPED).
- Most MDE and PELSB web reports unavailable

Services **available** during conversion window:

- MDE and PELSB websites
- Cyber-Linked Interactive Child Nutrition Systems (CLiCS 1 and CLiCS 2) web applications
- State enterprise email
- State enterprise SharePoint sites
- MDE online forms
- Statewide Integrated Financial Tools (SWIFT)

Tuesday, February 18, 2020, at open of business:

- The new Minnesota School Finance Systems (MSFS) will be available for production use for MDE school finance division staff.
- All MDE and PELSB web applications and web reports will be back online and available.

- The DataBridge replacement, MSFS_Sync, will be available for access to School Finance data. Instructions will be available for converting ad hoc data access configuration in Microsoft Access and/or Microsoft Excel from Databridge to MSFS_Sync.
- The Educator Licensing (STAFF) user code on the mainframe will be back online and available to PELSB only.
- The STAFF and Staff Automated Reporting (STAR) tables on Databridge will be made available again. However, School Finance tables will no longer be available on Databridge.

For External Users

Services unavailable from Thursday, February 13, 2020, at 5 p.m. until start of business on Tuesday, February 18, 2020:

- Most MDE and PELSB web applications disabled, including SEDRA, ADMWE and ACTE-SPED.
- Most MDE and PELSB web reports unavailable

Services **available** during conversion window:

- MDE and PELSB websites
- CLiCS 1 and CLiCS 2 web applications

Tuesday, February 18, 2020, at open of business:

- All MDE and PELSB web applications and web reports will be back online and available.

Contact

If you have any questions about the above changes, please contact:

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