**Counselor Talk pros/cons on PowerSchool and Skyward**

1. **I have used both systems and find Power School much more user friendly.**

**2.  We switched from PowerSchool to Skyward a few years ago.**

**Skyward is so much better!**

**Skyward Pros -**

**Tech support is outstanding (as compared to PowerSchool. In PowerSchool one tech could tell you to change something and the tech would have absolutely no idea how that one little change could totally crew up something on a report somewhere....our biggest issue with PowerSchool was that the set up support was not as good and therefore we had many things that did not work properly (like class rankings, honor roll reports, GPA calculations)....**

**Skyward reports are easily ran (sometimes can take a minute to run a report but the process is easy)**

**Skyward scheduling is easy (at the HS level). When we were on PowerSchool we would always get some error when building and it was a pain to even diagnose the problem. In Skyward, we are able to set up our courses and sections with ease. We are a school of about 540 kids and we basically just copy our old master schedule and make changes manually to meet our needs from year to year. Very user friendly.**

**Skyward transcripts are easy to custom create and we have good success with uploading them to Parchment each semester.**

**Skyward seems to help at the Indiana level where PowerSchool mostly makes Indiana schools just adjust to however their program is set up to support multiple states. Skyward has an Indiana user group that can help make modifications as needed (like the new graduation pathways are in the grad report for us to use).**

**There are probably more but those are the ones off the top of my head. As you can tell....definite fan of Skyward over PowerSchool.**

**3.  I have used both.  I was involved in a school when they brought in skyward and I was trained in it.  I became extremely proficient with it. I was able to make it do things that even their own people didn't know it could do, and ended up being the person our tech department called when they needed to troubleshoot so they didn't have to sit on the phone with support from skyward.  I liked most everything with it except that you had to drill down through menus and there was a lot of clicking at times to get to things that you wanted/needed. I got to the point that I didn't notice much at all, but my wife joined me at the district I was at coming from another system and she hated skyward.**

**I left there and now use powerschool.  Initially I hated it and thought that it was a fairly incompetent system by comparison.  However, I have never officially been trained in using powerschool. Everything that I have learned I have picked up mostly on my own with a little guidance and assistance here and there from co-workers.  But even they didn't realize what powerschool could do and we have begun to push the system to do what we want it to do rather than just sit content with what it can do on the surface level.**

**Ultimately both systems are very capable and useful in different ways.  I have numerous pros/cons for each, but they weigh themselves out for the most part.  I like that powerschool is pretty easy to pick up on at the basic level, but there are things that I wish it would do.  With skyward it will do just about anything that you want it to do but you have to really have an understanding of the program and how it works to get to that point and it is not quite as user friendly from the start.  A little bit of training would be useful to get started where I think many people could get started with a basic tutorial in powerschool. I preferred skyward, but it worked in a manner that made sense to me probably more so because I was trained in it from the start.  Powerschool doesn't always seem to work in the same way or make as much sense to me in terms of how it is set up, but I wasn't trained in it and because of that I have always felt it was lacking when in reality it probably isn't.**

**4.  We have PowerSchool.**

**Pro's = Most of the schools around us are on PowerSchool, students can place their schedule requests online (but it is also fairly easy for counselors to put in for the students if you are at a small school.) There is also a user network of schools in Indiana that use PowerSchool and they have a conference/training every year in June.  Also, if your district will pay for it, there is a great conference every year for IT and administrators of PowerSchool. The conference is held about 4 times at different times/locations. It is pricy, but it is probably one of the best conferences I have ever attended. I learned so much.**

**Cons = the set up is lengthy and it is imperative that not only your IT, but counselors and administration be a part of the initial set-up.  Once you are set up, only two people (or however many your district is willing to pay for - each additional person costs more money) are allowed to contact technical support.  So if someone has an issue that you or your IT cannot resolve then it is up to one of those persons to call for support. Sometimes, they do not really fully understand the issue so it can be a back and forth process.**

**5.  I prefer Skyward. Way easier to navigate and pull reports, Checking grades, data pulled from gradebooks, scheduling in general. It has the capability of a guidance sign in where a student puts in their ID # and it automatically logs their entry time. When I was done with the student, a couple of clicks to release the student and all documented. Discipline is easier to log on Skyward with a few clicks. Power School requires a log entry which gets mixed all together with counselor notes, nurses notes, and admin notes. Power School I find to be very inefficient. I switched schools from a counselor on Skyward to an Assistant Principal on Power School and in charge of the Master Schedule and all testing. In my experience. I dislike Power School.**

**6.  At my previous school we had Skyward and I was there for implementation of Skyward. My current school has PowerSchool and I am still learning the program.**

**Here is what I have established...Skyward is not as "aesthetically" pretty and was clearly created by a tech person with little education/school counseling experience. So be prepared for LOTS of clicking to do things. BUT the program can do pretty much anything you want it to do. If you get Skyward, I would advocate to have rights to work directly with the support team. The tech support is AMAZING! They are very quick to respond and will walk you through anything you need. Also the webinars are very helpful for training. Overall, after 3 years I liked the program but it took at least two years to learn the basic features, then the following years I was learning the more specific features of the program. The first couple years were rough!**

**PowerSchool is much more user friendly and more intuitive than Skyward...at least for me. The steps to do things are much more logical. PowerSchool does not have all the features for reports that I have found and cannot do as much as Skyward. PowerSchool does have everything I need though. I also find it a easier to look at and can do what I want it to do. I have not had to use their support yet because I have to go through my tech department for PowerSchool help, and it is hard to explain to a tech person what I need.**

**As far as the parent view, I think PowerSchool is easier to use for parents than Skyward.**

**7.  I have used both. I think PowerSchool is more user friendly and it has the ability to run so many different kinds of reports, making it easy to find information quickly. Skyward wasn't bad, but one thing that's really unusual is that it only alphabetizes by the first five letters of student last names. It messed up some of our state reports when it alphabetized Steve and Stevens wrong, or Williams and Williamson. Also, when you print anything from Skyward, the font is pretty small. PowerSchool printouts are easy to read and you can customize so many things on your reports. This is my first year using PowerSchool and the only thing I don't care for is how to input course requests during the scheduling process. There are too many things to click just to make one request. Hope this helps!**

**8.  Our school corp. uses PowerSchool.  I would say their customer support is lacking.  Often times, when I have to call for assistance, as a last report, they don't seem to have an answer or it takes a very long time for them to find the answer.  I usually end up going back to PowerSource, their community-focused customer support portal. It allows other schools to post problems and see what others have done to fix the problem.  PowerSource has a knowledge base with great articles and manuals to help. I often find PowerSource more helpful.**

**The scheduling part is called PowerScheduler.  I put the master schedule in PowerSchool and then the system puts student schedules together based on student requests.  PowerSchool has the capability to set it up so students can make request their classes online. I have never used that feature.  I have seen some high schools use it.**

**When I first started in the school corporation, the school didn't provide any training at all.  The PowerSchool language/terminology was foreign to me. I had to learn and find answers myself or talk to someone in our Tech Dept. for help.  Now, 8 yrs. later, I am able to get through scheduling quicker. I would suggest if your school decides to go with PowerSchool, or any SIS, make sure the school is going to provide adequate training.  PowerSchool has trainings throughout the year. I have gone during summer in June and around this time of year they have trainings specifically related to master scheduling. I am always learning something new about PowerSchool to make my job easier.**