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## State of Indiana, Dept. of Education Providing Accountability for “No Child Left Behind”

### **Business Situation:**

In Indiana, the grade-level standardized test ISTEP+ holds schools, school corporations, and the state accountable for improved performance as specified in NCLB (No Child Left Behind). However, students who perform significantly above or below grade-level may have personal learning goals that cannot be adequately measured with such a test. This population includes students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for fewer than three years, and gifted students.

To address this need, the Indiana Department of Education Division of Exceptional Learners desired to introduce an alternate assessment component—the Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR)—founded on the principle that teachers are capable partners in collecting valid and reliable assessment data to purposefully capture student progress. Within ISTAR, they envisioned that each student would be rated on appropriate educational standards, through the use of a three-point rubric. Teachers could base their ratings on evidence such as observations, work samples, and portfolios. These ratings would then be tabulated to provide a score relative to the student’s abilities, grade level, and individual progress from one year to the next, providing accountability for these populations as well.

### **Solution Description:**

Having previously depended on Ambassador to produce ICAN (the individualized curriculum assessment notebook), the Indiana Department of Education turned to Ambassador again to deliver ISTAR as a web-based solution. Ambassador created a 3-tier web-based solution based upon ASP.NET, written in C# using Visual Studio.NET. The database was hosted in SQL Server, and is kept in sync with the DOE’s STN (Student Test Number) Oracle database via a nightly update process. Since funds originated from US Department of Education, the web site was required to be Section 508 compatible (accessible to the disabled). Also, because it was to be used in every school in Indiana, the site had to be cross-browser compatible. Ambassador was able to achieve faster time-to-market by building upon the existing ICAN foundation. This also enabled the entire ISTAR assessment framework to be directly manipulated by the education content experts, without programmer intervention, using the ICAN tool suite.

During its first year of usage, ISTAR was used by teachers to measure student progress within the domains of mathematics, language arts, and functional achievement. During its second year, its use was extended to a new population of users, that of speech and language pathologists. Extension into additional areas should prove equally pain-free. Using Data Dynamics ActiveReports for .NET, reports were designed to give teachers a visual depiction of individual student progress. Additional reports were created to furnish district administrators with statistics on the current level of compliance within their domain, helping them to drive toward full accountability by the end of the ISTAR season.

### **Technologies Used:**

- Visual Studio (.NET 1.1 & 2.0)
- Asp.NET (C#)
- SQL Server, Windows Server
- Data Dynamics ActiveReports for .NET

### **Benefits/Results:**

Thanks in part to ISTAR, Indiana is a step closer to the dream of having “no children left behind”. Now mandated by state law, ISTAR is utilized by 8,000 teachers and administrators within Indiana to measure the progress of 50,000 students. At the height of the fall data-collection season, 1,000 teachers a day access to the web site to perform assessments and produce reports. As state procedures (and laws) have changed, ISTAR has proven to be a flexible platform for further development. Plus, ISTAR now serves as a firm foundation for new web-based solutions.

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