



Lower Costs, Higher Satisfaction for a Fast-Growing Texas District

Located about 25 miles north of Dallas and Fort Worth, the Denton Independent School District (Denton ISD) is the second-fastest-growing school district in North Texas. From 2000 to the 2009-10 school year, the student population in the district grew from 13,541 to 22,688 students. To accommodate this growth, the district has opened, on average, one to three new facilities each year.

Throughout this ongoing expansion, the district has worked hard to maintain its outstanding academic performance and provide an exceptional learning environment. Even though the district is very large, it places a heavy focus on retaining a strong sense of community.

THE TRANSITION: FROM TREPIDATION TO TRIUMPH

Until 2006, all of the district's custodial needs were being handled by in-house staff. However, as the district continued to grow, the in-house crew was unable to keep up with the increasing demands of the workload. Additionally, the quality of work wasn't meeting the district's

high standards and custodial expenses were falling out of line with budgetary constraints. More help, or some kind of change, was needed.

To address the growing custodial needs, the district issued a request for proposal for a pilot program that would outsource the custodial work in five new buildings.

Despite the evident cleaning shortfalls and the numerous benefits an outside contractor can achieve, this decision came with some trepidation, recalls Paul Andress, Director of Operations at Denton ISD. "The principals were comfortable working directly with their head custodians and many members of the custodial team were reluctant about the idea of bringing in a third party," he recalls.



**PAUL
ANDRESS**
Director of
Operations

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After a thorough review process, the decision was made to go with SSC thanks to their lower cost and their strong referrals from numerous satisfied school districts. Since that time, the relationship between Denton and SSC has grown considerably, along with the number of facilities that SSC cleans. **As of January 2014 SSC was responsible for custodial services at 34 of the district’s 47 facilities.**

Although Andress acknowledges that there have been some inevitable growing pains along the way, he firmly asserts that SSC would not be with Denton ISD today if the partnership wasn’t working well. It has been a win-win situation that has resulted in:

- an enhanced sense of teamwork among the custodial staff
- substantially cleaner facilities
- significant cost savings

For example, in 2011, Denton ISD awarded SSC ten new facilities to clean. As a result of labor and supply cost savings, **Andress estimates SSC helped the district save about \$400,000.**

GREATER EFFICIENCIES/STAFFING STRATEGIES

John Lane, Senior Regional Manager for SSC, attributes the cost savings and improved custodial outcomes

at Denton to a number of changes and efficiencies, such as:

- **Materials and supply purchasing:** Based largely on sheer volume, SSC enjoys substantially greater purchasing power and is able to pass these savings on to Denton.
- **Efficient staffing:** Appropriate numbers of staff are in place to accommodate changing custodial needs throughout the school year.
- **Training:** Custodial staff are thoroughly trained and incentivized to ensure consistent and exceptional results.

Andress also notes the changes in the way the staff are managed and how they work together. For example, the custodial crew generally does not engage in the heavy maintenance that was once required, resulting in a much greater team approach. Additionally, there are now four SSC supervisors on site at all times to conduct inspections and take care of any issues or emergencies that may arise.

Last but definitely not least, Andress acknowledges the role SSC has taken to ensure a strong sense of community when working with members of the district’s existing custodial staff. For example, when significant budget cuts required a reduction in the district’s workforce in 2011, SSC offered jobs to the in-house employees who were impacted. “It was huge to step up and offer jobs at pretty much the same pay rate,” observed Andress.

It really circles back, Lane notes, to the important role the community plays in a school district like Denton, and the need to ensure that employees are treated in the most fair and considerate manner possible.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

As the students at Denton ISD have continued to receive top grades, so too has SSC, according to the custodial report cards issued by schools/facilities within the district each month.

For example, of the grades for the six-month period lasting from October 2011 through March 2012, SSC received 91% As and Bs.

The remaining grades indicated specific areas of opportunity where additional custodial attention was needed, providing valuable feedback for SSC to take back to its team.

“You can’t manage two million square feet and not have issues,” Andress concedes. That said, he applauds SSC’s overall high scores and exemplary performance.

Given the success Denton has had with SSC, the district is now moving to outsource all of its custodial services, and workforce changes are being conducted through attrition.

“The bottom line,” Andress says of Denton’s partnership with SSC, “is you form these relationships and trust, and they become just like employees of the district.”