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The student success company.

Choosing a School Locator

Based on research conducted by the Communication Accountability Project (CAP), it is clear that community and family involvement has a positive impact on a student's academic achievements. And because successful communication is key to becoming and staying involved, one way that school districts across the nation are making an effort to streamline communication between their district and community is by using web-based school locator applications. These applications provide parents with instant access to the information they need (such as school assignments by home address, school boundaries, school site locations, and bus stops), save administrative staff time when responding to parent inquiries, and help administrators and planners process and visualize data during long-range boundary-planning sessions.

Is it accurate?

Many districts post color-coded PDF maps on their website to communicate school boundaries. But as roads change and new neighborhoods are added, these maps quickly become outdated. In contrast, school locator applications that are powered by geographic information system (GIS) technology provide online maps that ensure the most up-to-date information. The LocateMySchool™ application uses GIS technology and is also integrated with Google Maps to provide the most accurate imagery of your school district.

Is it easy to use?

Look for a tool that is fast, highly intuitive, and simple to use. With a few clicks, users should be able to find a variety of data, including the closest bus stop, where their child will go to high school, or the walking distance from school to home. Avoid any barriers where users have to create logins or provide personal information, which may deter them from using it.

Is it convenient?

Think of the last time you searched for a location. You probably used the GPS on your smartphone. Roughly 77% of Americans own a smartphone, so a school locator that can be accessed anytime and anywhere is an indispensable tool. Also, consider an application with a familiar user experience like Google Maps. This will help users feel more comfortable when using the locator.comfortable when using the locator.

Is it accessible?

Many districts use school locators multiple times a day and provide access to the application through their school or district website. Select a tool that users can find quickly, is available 24 hours a day, and is accessible on multiple devices: desktops, laptops, tablets, and mobile phones.

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Can it be implemented quickly?

Thanks to GIS technology, school locator applications can be quick and painless for a district to implement. Find a company that will do the work for you as opposed to leaving you to do the heavy lifting. Also make sure that your provider offers ongoing support and is committed to ensuring that the solution works properly.

Can it be customized for your district?

Make sure the application has the ability to manage a variety of customized layers and shows relevant geographic points that are important to your users. These points may include bus stop locations, crossing guard locations, sports venue locations, and/or after-school program locations. Providing these points on the district map offers an important service not available on general mapping applications.

Is it affordable?

The price of a school locator can differ based on your district's needs. In most cases, the benefits of providing your users with such a powerful tool outweigh the associated costs. Compare the cost of answering 50 calls a day or frustrated and confused parents to the cost of a self-serve online school locator.

Looking for a school locator that satisfies all the questions on this list? See how the LocateMySchool™ interactive software-as-a-service can help save your district time by communicating important school site and boundary information to parents and your school community.

Resources

LocateMySchool™ Software-as-a-Service

Four Tips to Save Time Answering Parent Questions

Communicating Through Maps

Leverage the Power of GIS Technology to Improve Communication