

Transforming Fulfillment: How School Specialty Achieved a Seamless WMS Implementation



1 Introduction

School Specialty, a leading provider of educational products and services to over 100,000 schools across North America, partnered with Alpine Supply Chain Solutions to implement a new Warehouse Management System (WMS) at its Mansfield, Ohio facility. This project was part of a broader, multi-year fulfillment operations upgrade aimed at increasing efficiency, consistency, and inventory visibility across four major distribution centers. As the highest-producing location in

the company's network, Mansfield was selected as the pilot site for the initiative. To ensure a smooth rollout, School Specialty reached out to Alpine Supply Chain Solutions for support.



2 Challenge

Modernizing the Mansfield facility posed several key challenges. The team needed to overhaul outdated manual processes without disrupting operations during peak season.

Gathering accurate dimension and stack pattern data was difficult due to time constraints and limited resources, forcing the use of generic data in some areas to maintain momentum.

At the same time, the organization had to ensure that warehouse staff (who were accustomed to legacy processes) could quickly adapt to the new WMS through targeted training and strong communication, all while continuing to meet productivity targets.



3 Solutions

Alpine addressed these challenges with a structured, people-first approach that integrated technical support, training, documentation, and change management. Leveraging School Specialty's existing training culture, Alpine enhanced documentation processes by refining document types, improving version control, and developing clear, contextual Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). These SOPs provided supervisors and new hires with both step-by-step instructions and the reasoning behind key processes.



Training methods were updated to improve scale and impact.

Trainer-to-associate ratios were increased from two to five, enabling full building training without compromising quality. Alpine introduced web-based content and detailed agendas that focused on core WMS concepts rather than just surface-level outlines.

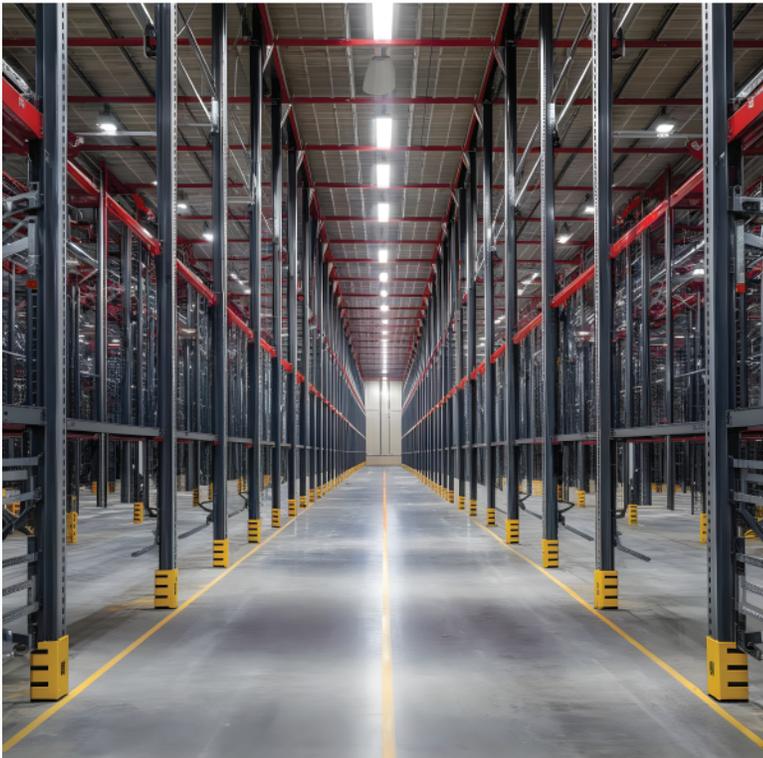
Additionally, five associates formed a “Tiger Team” to support the implementation internally, evolving into project advocates and peer coaches throughout the transition.



4 Implementation

Implementation followed a collaborative and phased approach. Alpine's early involvement ensured alignment between project goals and day-to-day operations. Each phase—testing, training, mock go-lives, and the final launch—was guided by clearly defined metrics and feedback loops. The team made strategic adjustments when necessary, such as prioritizing high-impact tests and reusing data to maximize limited time during peak season.

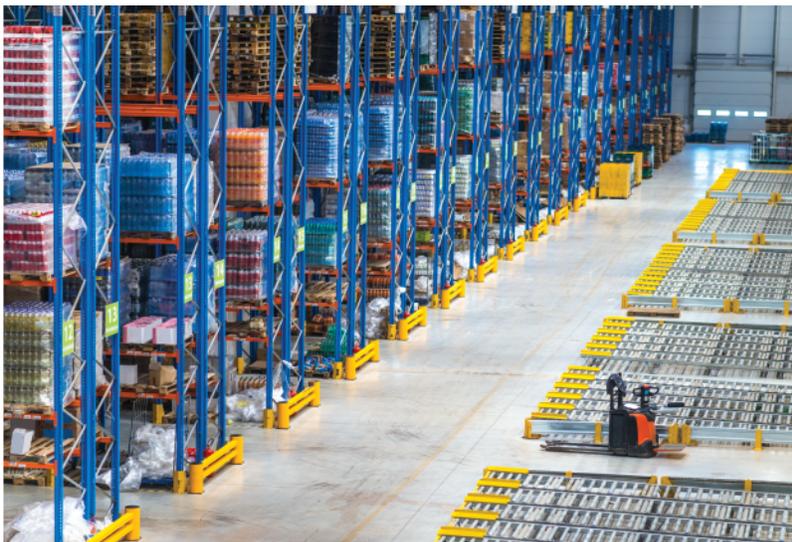
Change management was central to the project. Alpine's communication strategy included leadership announcements, trainer messaging, and end-user updates to keep everyone informed and aligned. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined, and performance was measured throughout the process. A key move just before go-live involved turning off override functions for stockers, helping identify and resolve root-cause issues rather than relying on workarounds.



5 Results

The WMS implementation at Mansfield was a clear success. User adoption exceeded expectations, driven by clear training and strong communication. Associates quickly became confident using the new system, which minimized disruptions and accelerated post-launch productivity. Operational efficiency improved significantly, with streamlined processes and better inventory accuracy. By focusing training and testing on real business scenarios, the team ensured the WMS worked as intended in daily operations.

The project also delivered lasting organizational value. The Tiger Team model and SOP enhancements created sustainable internal support systems. The combination of strategic planning, performance tracking, and continuous feedback ensured that the WMS was not only implemented but optimized. Mansfield's success now serves as a blueprint for future rollouts across the company's network.



6

Conclusion

The Mansfield WMS implementation demonstrates the power of a holistic, collaborative approach to large-scale operational change. Alpine's integration of training, documentation, and change management with technical execution helped School Specialty modernize its most critical facility without disrupting performance. The project highlights how a thoughtful, structured strategy—one that empowers both leadership and frontline teams—can turn a complex implementation into a long-term success.

