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SIFA Success Story

Implementation Demographic Information:

Name of school or district: Orange County Public Schools

Location (including state): Orlando, FL

Enrollment count: **174,060**

Number of buildings involved: Districtwide – 155+ schools

Problem to be solved/Pain points:

It all started in 1999 with an ID badge. As a new state demonstration middle school was being constructed, Orange County Public Schools had a new requirement: all middle school students must wear a badge for security purposes. Ocoee Middle School took this requirement to the next step and installed prox card readers at each door, which in turn gave staff and students one thing in common: an ID badge. Rather than producing separate ID's for building access, lunch and the library – a search was made to find a product that could tie a student ID to many applications such as commonly practiced in Higher Ed. What they discovered was that no such thing existed in K-12 and the same tools used in higher ed were very costly. When the district examined the feasibility of a unified ID badge, a second issue emerged: data downloads. The current model for moving data to the school involves downloads from the student system to a Transfer folder on a centralized file server. Schools submitted the names of the people authorized to access their folders. All data download files were placed in the appropriate folder for import into various school applications. The district was then contacted by a participating SIF vendor, who encouraged the district to become a SIF pilot site. The initial pilot involved tying the student management, photo id, food service, and media management system together using CPSI's SIF-Connect Server.

Solutions:

After piloting at Ocoee Middle for two years, the IT department examined the feasibility of expanding district wide. A large district challenge is network account management for the district's staff and students. Four years ago, the district contracted a web-based process for Exchange 5.5 account creation. The process became outdated when they upgraded to the AD-based Exchange 2000. Accounts were created in batch mode and were often out of synch with the HR system, SAP. There was also no routine for removal of network and e-mail accounts. Management of the 1,500+ distribution lists by the single e-mail administrator has become a nightmare. In addition, the process was not recognized by state IT auditors as secure, nor were network account passwords considered secure.

What applications were integrated together? (Give any applicable details)

The district chose SIF as the standard for network account creation. Since SAP (Orange County's HR system) does not have a SIF agent, they used CPSI's Universal Agent to feed data to the other SIF-enabled applications. The district plans to standardize their active directory with a combination of Visual CASEL,



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VC Lite (where the client is not needed) and Visual CASEL Agent for Active Directory/Exchange. The CPSI agents will be used to generate network accounts and Exchange mailboxes for all employees. In addition, Exchange accounts will be placed in the proper Exchange mail store and distribution lists based on the configuration they select during set up.

The CPSI agent will solve the housekeeping dilemma created out of the Florida Department of Education's paperless requirement. The DOE requires the district to maintain e-mail addresses for all principals in a generic form. The district has maintained by hand about 145 distribution lists tied to principal e-mail addresses as they move around the district. This process can now be automated so that Florida DOE officials can send messages directly to their intended principal. Another example of a newly automated distribution list is for all 10,000 + teachers. In the past, this list was impossible to maintain by hand. With the new agent, distribution lists can be created for all levels of teachers. Those who left the district will be automatically removed.

Since the IT Department was anxious to tighten network passwords, a new standard was put in place to address those needs using the flexibility of CPSI's SIF agent. All employee passwords will be expired so that new passwords can be created and renewed on a monthly basis. CPSI has developed a special process for employees to change and reset their passwords so that the district's Help Desk is not overwhelmed with calls.

In preparation for the switch to the new system, the IT Department's project includes a communication plan designed to keep both users and school technology coordinators in the loop. Several e-mail communications were sent out to all staff and to technology coordinators. A special task force of technology coordinators was also formed to help design the new process and to address issues. Before the migration to the new system, technology coordinators were invited to a district meeting that explained the new changes and how the changes would affect their jobs so that when the big day came, there were no surprises.

Follow Up/Results:

Once the "dust" settles from the migration to a new student information system, the district hopes to continue with student accounts. A pilot will begin once the SIS is stable and they hope to expand the use of SIF with other district network applications.