



CASE STUDY: Mesquite Independent School District, TX

The accuracy with SIF and your data is critical. With some of the traditional ways of doing integration, some applications don't like to be corrected. Using SIF makes this process seamless. Once data is corrected, it is corrected everywhere. I don't see how a district half our size could do it differently - especially at this price.

- Dennis Hevron

Director - Technical Services

Mesquite ISD

Overview of Problem

Located 10 miles East of Dallas and servicing an area of 60 square miles, Mesquite Independent School District was looking to fully automate the management of student and employee network and email accounts. Mesquite ISD Information Technology (IT) staff was spending literally weeks before the start of school managing the process. With limited IT resources and responsibility for maintaining and implementing technology for forty five campuses, the task of manually managing the accounts had become too time consuming for the IT staff.

To accomplish the automation, Mesquite ISD wanted student accounts to be managed from data in their student information system (Pearson Chancery SMS) and employee accounts from their human resources/finance system (Tyler Technologies MUNIS). Data from both applications would drive the account management in the district's Microsoft Active Directory and Exchange solution. Ultimately, streamlining this data integration would dramatically save staff time, improve IT security, increase data quality and provide accounts to teachers, administrators and students in a more timely manner.

Demographic Information of Implementation

Mesquite ISD is located in east Dallas County, drawing students from the communities of Mesquite, Garland, Balch Springs and Dallas. The district encompasses:

- 45 campuses
- 35,000 students
- Student Population: 43% Hispanic, 28% White, 26% African American, 3% Other
- 60% economically disadvantaged

Technical Solution and Applications

Mr. Dennis Hevron, Director of Technical Services, first learned about SIF from the district's Administrative Officer of Technology, Mr. Richard Armand, and followed up with research at a local state conference. He quickly learned that SIF could meet Mesquite's challenges in a cost effective way. The first step towards SIF Implementation included a release of an RFP for integration of Pearson Chancery SMS, Tyler Technologies MUNIS and Microsoft Active Directory and Exchange.

After review by the RFP committee, Mesquite ISD selected Mizuni to provide the Zone Integration Services (ZIS) software and SIF implementation services based on Mizuni's past success in Texas school districts and close proximity of their corporate office located just North of Dallas. After beginning their SIF Implementation in the Summer of 2008, the district has now successfully automated student accounts by implementing the Mizuni ZIS and Mizuni SIF Agent for Pearson Chancery SMS and Microsoft Active Directory and Exchange. The district is currently wrapping up testing of Mizuni SIF Agent for Tyler Technologies MUNIS to automate employee accounts.

SIF not only saves a lot of staff time doing routine tasks, it saves quite a bit of money over time. I would do it all over again and do not see why someone would not do SIF.

- Dennis Hevron

Director - Technical Services

Mesquite ISD

Benefits Achieved and Results

After running for only eight months, the Mesquite ISD SIF Implementation already realizes benefits. The largest benefit has been staff time savings. The amount of time that IT staff spent on adding new student accounts for all of the various applications within the school district has been reduced from weeks of manual work to about a single day of work. While there has been an upfront cost, implementing SIF has saved Mesquite ISD money in terms of accounts management, staff time and integration costs.

Finally, Mesquite has realized a large increase in data quality. Running multiple systems provides much room for error when entering data; and error-laden data is useless. With the SIF Implementation in place, data can be corrected in one system and the corrections flow to all SIF-connected systems automatically and seamlessly.

Lessons Learned

Throughout the SIF Implementation for Mesquite ISD, several lessons emerged.

- Implement SIF. It has saved time and money, and increased data quality.
- Take the implementation in small steps. Start with just a couple of your core applications and then add additional agent/application pairings.
- Work with vendors that respond. It can be disconcerting initially not knowing the vendor and the associated costs. Work with vendors that respond with timely and accurate information.
- Spend time up front planning. Planning for your SIF Implementation and doing your research will save time, money and frustration.
- Obtain a maintenance agreement. Using a solid, responsive vendor for maintenance can save staff time and expenses.

Next Steps

Mesquite ISD's future plans include completing the automation of employee accounts in the coming months and adding other applications to their SIF Implementation. The current planned expansion includes integrating the Healthmaster Holdings HealthOffice, Spectrum K12 School Solutions Encore and Cybersoft Technologies Primero applications. In addition, district staff will be working with several software vendors whose applications do not currently support SIF to create agents for their applications so they can be integrated into the district's SIF Solution.

About the SIF Association

The SIF Association is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of over 2,300 schools, districts, states, U.S. Department of Education, International Ministries of Education, software vendors and consultants who collectively define the rules and regulations for educational software data interoperability. The SIF Implementation Specification enables diverse applications to interact and share data and information efficiently, reliably, and securely regardless of the platform hosting those applications. The SIF Association has united these education technology end users and providers in an unprecedented effort to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach. For further information, visit <http://www.sifassociation.org>.



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