



Duval County Public Schools and CPSI: A SIFA Success Story

Implementation Demographic Information:

Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, FL

Enrollment count: 129,964

Number of buildings: 163 schools districtwide

Problem:

Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) encompasses the City of Jacksonville, Florida with 129,000 students and 14,800 employees that include 7,300 teachers and more than 160 schools. The county covers approximately 840-square miles and is populated by just over 1 million residents. Such a large district needed an automated way to create and maintain user accounts using existing resources to accomplish the task.

Duval County Public Schools, a long-time Computer Power Solutions of Illinois (CPSI) customer, started using Visual CASEL for NT several years ago as the desktop management standard in the district. In summer 2003, they began their deployment of Visual CASEL for Windows 2000 as they upgraded schools across the district. The past two years in the IT department have culminated in: multiple deployments of Microsoft Exchange for district teachers; a data warehouse; an upgrade to their HR/Finance System (SAP); and the creation of its own student information system--the Education Information Network (EdIN). These projects gave a chance for the IT Department to evaluate its current way of administering network and application security, including portal technology. As a result, John Morrison, IT Supervisor, came to the realization that the district did not have enough staff for the upkeep of a myriad network accounts, data warehouse, Exchange accounts, EdIN, SAP portal accounts and so forth. Why not move the district toward a single sign-on approach? In addition, Morrison was looking for an automated approach to creating network accounts that include home directories on the appropriate school file server, user profiles and Exchange accounts. The concepts were merged using CPSI's SIF-Connect Suite.

SIF Solutions:

The district then embarked on the districtwide deployment of a SIF-normalized active directory affecting over 170 schools and work locations, making it one of the largest districtwide SIF deployments. Essential to this deployment was the time the IT staff took to review their current active directory structure and then standardize it using Visual CASEL and the AD Agent. Job titles and responsibility centers (schools and departments) are matched to SIF data elements, and then associated with organization units in the active directory so that network accounts can flow to the proper OU and obtain home directories and profiles. The Exchange agent associates the user with his or her location and job title so that he or she can be placed in the appropriate distribution groups in Exchange. When a person changes positions or schools, the distribution lists are automatically updated to reflect the changes. As a result, over 14,800 staff and teacher accounts were created in a matter of hours rather than weeks or months. Now that all accounts are synchronized, only changes are passed through the system. Based on the volume of accounts, those changes add up to about 80 per day.

One benefit of Duval's solution was the implementation of a web-based AUP policy for teachers and staff. New staff members access a secure web site where they identify themselves, read and accept the district's AUP, and the system issues a new logonid. The district determined that once the staff member logs

in, he or she must change the password. Once this is accomplished, a mailbox is created in Exchange and the user can access the network and his or her e-mail account.

The district started with its student information system to create network accounts for students, then they added their employees. Once the active directory became SIF-enabled, any SIF application that uses the newly added Authentication Object in the 1.5 SIF Data Object Specification for authentication can be used in the same manner to generate a network identity. This data object enables disjointed applications to use the same username and password in their specific applications, or it could enable all the applications in a zone to become aware of a single network username associated with a person. Any SIF-compliant application that the district adds that is aware of this data object will be able to pass authentication information.

Results:

What made Duval's implementation so successful? One big factor in their success was the resounding buy-in from the district's chief technology officer, Craig Honour, although he was new to the district. Duval's IT staff was able to demonstrate that the Schools Interoperability Framework standard was necessary for the automation of network account creation and would enable the district to expand to applications that were implemented districtwide, such as their food service application. Duval has now made SIF a standard expectation and has made it a requirement for all new RFP's.