AFTER THE MOVE:
Discover how 3 districts are succeeding after their Qmlativ migration.

QMLATIV SPOTLIGHT:
THE SKYWARD COMMUNITY

PROJECT QMLATIV:
ESTABLISHING TIMELINES
In 2016, we announced the launch of our Qmlativ Education Management System. Since then, I have watched as our customers introduced Qmlativ to their communities, customized it to their unique processes, and provided us with new ideas to continue evolving the system.

Now, I welcome you to our Qmlativ magazine — a publication with the deepest collection of news, stories, and insights regarding our SQL-based platform.

Whether you are evaluating a new SIS, preparing for the move, or already using the system, I am confident you will find an abundance of valuable information.

If you’re looking for first-hand experiences from other districts, flip to pages 14, 20, and 34. Are you looking for more of a behind-the-scenes look? Skip to page 10 to read how user feedback is shaping our software.

The future is exciting, and together, we can achieve a better overall experience. Thanks for reading.

Scott Glinski, Skyward CEO

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ABOUT SKYWARD

At Skyward, we’re changing the conversation about administrative software. Since the launch of our first product in 1981, we have remained committed to a better experience for every user. Now with Qmlativ, the next generation of Skyward technology, school districts will work smarter, engage more, and empower all stakeholders using the most innovative solution of its kind.

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Glenbrook High School District 225
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Scott Glinski, Skyward CEO
Qmlativ Education Management System, the next evolution of Skyward technology, is the epitome of a better SIS and ERP experience. Built to leverage the latest technology, it’s more than just a promise of features and functionality.

This SQL-based platform combines an enjoyable user interface with preemptive support measures and a focus on the growth and development of every user.

The most innovative platform the Skyward community has ever seen and most advanced system available, Qmlativ has been used by early adopters since 2014.

Based on feedback from our early adopters and a number of current customers, Qmlativ has been developed to ensure your needs are met today and well into the future.

An overarching goal of Qmlativ is to deliver the right information to the right person, every time. This level of personalization and customization makes Qmlativ the most innovative solution of its kind.

Ray Ackerlund, Skyward President

Learn more at: skyward.com/qmlativ
Every new product release comes with its share of excitement, and Qmlativ is no different. A new interface, redefined processes, and a better experience are all reasons to be optimistic about what we have in store for you in the months and years to come.

You might be wondering, why change? We’ve been lucky to have a front-row seat to Qmlativ’s development — and plenty of time to get excited about the features that make Qmlativ well worth the transition.

We’re here to help you understand what’s different about Qmlativ and how it can make your experience better every day. With that in mind, we’ve selected five common situations to demonstrate some noteworthy differences between Qmlativ and its predecessor, SMS 2.0.

### SEARCH

In SMS 2.0, searching for a student looks different depending on which part of the system you’re in. In this image, the Student Locator in Educator Access Plus was used to search for a student. This is a handy feature, but it won’t take you to the student’s profile. When searching from other screens, you need to have a pretty good idea of what you’re looking for, whether it’s a last name or a namekey. The same holds true for vendors, employees, and reports.

With Qmlativ’s global search, you can search for just about any piece of information from any screen in the system. Global search will locate any example of the word or phrase in the system, even with only a small fraction of the name or word to work from. Notice how the search in this example returned results for students and family guardians. We expect this feature to be a major timesaver for anyone who needs to perform quick lookups throughout the course of a normal day.
SMS 2.0 vs. QMLATIV

FIND CURRENT ENROLLMENT NUMBERS

This is a pretty basic data point to have at your disposal, right? In SMS 2.0, the information is available, but–admittedly—it takes a few steps to get there. In Student Management under Advanced Features, select Entity Counts to see a chart showing Current Counts.

This is a one-glance task in Qmlativ. For a quick peek at current enrollment numbers (or other metrics), give yourself a live tile and you’ll see up-to-date data right on your dashboard. Enrollment numbers will update whenever a change is made, and you can click on the tile to drill into more details.

PRODUCE REPORTS

Reporting in SMS 2.0 is more of a function over form endeavor. Reports are embedded into relevant areas of the software and you can typically find the information you need, but there are often additional steps involved to get the data in a presentable format.

One of the most exciting features of Qmlativ is its built-in report writer. Now, you’ll not only have an easier time finding the data you care about; you can also feel confident sharing it directly from Skyward. As an added bonus, Qmlativ’s dynamic chart tiles and live tiles should take the place of a number of recurring reports you may currently be scheduling in SMS 2.0. When the data’s right there on the dashboard of the person who needs it, there’s no need to send them something extra.

PROCESS PAYROLL

Payroll specialists have become accustomed to (and often very adept at) navigating our PaC and Web solutions, as both systems are required to complete payroll processing.

Qmlativ brings all Payroll tools together on the web. After just a couple payroll cycles, we’re confident you’ll feel comfortable navigating a smoother payroll processing workflow while using an interface that feels just a touch more modern.

GET HELP

The primary way to get help in SMS 2.0 is through SkyDoc, our repository for the written documentation and recorded webinars we’ve created over the years. There’s a lot of good information out here, but we’ll be the first to admit that navigation is not a strong suit.

When we first hatched plans for Qmlativ, we knew we wanted to take a new approach to customer support. The Help Center does just that. When you dig into the Help Center, you’ll find a differentiated library of videos, written tutorials, and interactive flowcharts designed to help you work smarter, no matter how much or how little prior knowledge you have.
Have you noticed an uptick in appearances of the word “experience” in recent Skyward content? That’s no accident.

We have made an organizational commitment to the principles of user experience (UX), to the point where our user-centric development process is now the guiding light that drives the direction of many of our products and services.

In my role as Skyward’s UX Strategist/Manager, my team and I are fortunate to work closely with our customers to confirm and validate feature enhancements as well as our development roadmap throughout our collaborative user-centered development (UCD) process.

The center of our core UX methodologies can be broken down into four main steps, encompassing the entire product development lifecycle.

1. IDENTIFY / VALIDATE USER NEEDS

It’s tough to come up with a solution if we don’t fully understand the problem. We use this step to collect as much data as possible. Some methods we rely on include:

- Contextual interviews
- Diary studies
- Quantitative studies
- Affinity mapping
- Stakeholder interviews

We know that Skyward has a significant role to play here, too. Since we are working with about 2,000 school districts, we are exposed to many different concepts and initiatives early in respective district adoptions.

This insight enables us to begin moving forward with future-ready capabilities before the majority of our customer base is even aware of the need, keeping Skyward districts well ahead of the curve when wish list items turn to “must-have” functionality.
2 BRAINSTORM POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Our developers may know the structure of our system better than anyone, but we can’t assume the first (or even the tenth) solution we envision is the best one for a given job. This phase is accompanied by:

- Prototypes, wireframes, and sketches
- Participatory design
- Field studies
- User task flow analysis
- Design studio and card sorting activities

If step one is the “why,” step two is the “what” of the UX process. In this line of work, we never like to assume anything, and direct user input during the conceptual design stage is a great way for us to ensure we’re pointing in the right direction before any development hours have been invested.

3 OPTIMIZE DESIGN AND FUNCTIONALITY

At this point, we’ve defined the objective, collaborated on design, and developed a working solution, but we’re not out of the woods yet. Optimization is the easiest step to overlook; after all, we worked together on the first two steps — shouldn’t that mean we’ve done our due diligence? Not always. Here are some ways we validate assumptions on previous efforts up to this point:

- Usability testing
- A/B testing
- Beta testing

In the worst-case scenario, this stage might reveal a feature or functional area of the software in which the sum of the parts does not equal a better experience overall. In the rare event that such a scenario occurs, this is a good opportunity to go back to the drawing board with a clearer vision of what we need to accomplish.

More often, the takeaways from this stage will be the minor revisions necessary to push a project from a “functional model” to a “successful, positive experience.”

4 MEASURE IMPACT

Once we’ve released a new feature, we want to make sure our expectations from the early phases of our user-centered design process have translated to the big stage. We track post-release data through various channels, with an eye on the following metrics to determine if a release was successful:

- Track benchmark data / KPIs
- Number of service calls
- Number of known defects
- Post-release user testing
- Track analytics or usage data

Our goal is for new enhancements or updates to increase usability and leave a better impression than any previous iteration. If the data tells a different story, we’ll know right away that more exploration is needed in that specific area.

HOW YOU CAN SHAPE OUR FUTURE

None of this is possible if we do not have a solid sample of Skyward users to collaborate with us along the way. That’s where you come in. As the scope of our research continues to grow, we are in need of more representation from our largest user bases, specifically teachers and parents.

We would love for you to be a part of our development process, but we’d be even more appreciative if you would be willing to get your community involved. Parents make up one of our largest user bases, but we don’t often get the opportunity to interact with them directly. UX is one area where more data is almost always better.

Please consider passing this message along to your teachers or colleagues, as well as parents, as it would go a long way toward helping us build a better experience for the people who count on you.

Are you a current Skyward customer and interested in joining our User Research Panel? Learn more by scanning the QR code, or visiting: SKYWARD.COM/RESEARCH
Improving the quality of K-12 education is the core mission of every district leader. Yet, the school business leader is often left out of the student achievement conversation. Glenbrook High School District 225, located north of Chicago, is the ideal example of how a district business office can influence mission and culture. Dr. R.J. Gravel, the district’s assistant superintendent for business services, says Glenbrook’s central goal is to “improve the experiences of students, parents, and staff,” which sounds simple on the surface. But with 5,151 students, 850 full-time employees, and a $134 million-dollar budget, Gravel’s goal is no small feat.

Enter technology. As a leading high school district in the Midwest, Glenbrook has developed and maintained many partnerships with its technology partners, including Skyward, the district’s enterprise resource planning (ERP) software (SMS 2.0) implemented in 2012. Over time, Glenbrook updated its internal processes, increased efficiency, and provided a more streamlined experience for stakeholders with the help of Skyward. Still, district leadership knew to achieve its goals, Glenbrook needed to continue advancing and set its sights on the future.

Cue Skyward’s Qmlativ School Business Suite, the latest evolution of its ERP software. Once district administrators learned of Qmlativ in 2016, Gravel rallied his team around the idea of being one of the first districts in Illinois to transition from their current Skyward business software, SMS 2.0, to Qmlativ. With the transition, Glenbrook would discover new ways to provide a better education experience from the district business office and also help Skyward develop and refine the future of school administrative software along the way.

GLENBROOK’S JOURNEY TO A BETTER EXPERIENCE

Glenbrook’s interest in Qmlativ started at Skyward’s annual international conference in 2017. While attending, Glenbrook’s team held multiple discussions with Skyward staff about moving to the new platform. By the end of the conference, Skyward granted Glenbrook access to Qmlativ’s sandbox, a testing environment where team members reviewed the similarities and differences between SMS 2.0 and Qmlativ.

“After seeing what Qmlativ offered, from the SQL database to the flexible interface, we recognized that it fit in line with our vision for the future,” explained Gravel. “It contained the most important qualities we look for in education technology: accessibility, attentiveness to district needs, in tune with national, state, and local changes, instant support, and a continuously evolving product.”

Excited about what they were seeing, Glenbrook leaders invited over 20 Chicagoland districts who were using Skyward’s SMS 2.0 School Business Suite to a roundtable event. At the event, Skyward staff introduced Qmlativ while Gravel encouraged attendees to follow the Twitter hashtag, #DiscoveringQ, to monitor Glenbrook’s implementation from beginning to end.

“We knew that a lot of school districts were considering the transition to Qmlativ and evaluating when they should make the leap,” explained Gravel. “Having been one of the first school districts in Illinois to transition from SMS 2.0 to Qmlativ, we documented our conversion from start to finish.”

Having been one of the first school districts in Illinois to transition from SMS 2.0 to Qmlativ, WE DOCUMENTED OUR CONVERSION FROM START TO FINISH.

Dr. R.J. Gravel, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services

To learn more about Glenbrook High School District 225 and their continued exploration of Qmlativ, follow Dr. R.J. Gravel on Twitter @rjgravel or the hashtag #DiscoveringQ.
THE TRANSITION

Over the course of almost a year (February–December 2017), the Glenbrook team explored Qmlativ and partnered with Skyward developers to lay out a successful Qmlativ roadmap. “Unlike a typical vendor-customer conversation, Skyward was equally interested in learning about our needs, and our business processes,” explained Gravel. However, even with a roadmap in place, Glenbrook’s leadership knew that any hope of a smooth transition would involve planning and preparation. “When you are one of the ‘first’ to implement a new technology, you admittedly take a risk that something might not work the way you need it to work,” stated Gravel. “But at the same time, our eyes were wide open.”

To do their part, district leadership reviewed processing schedules, school activity calendars, and audit timelines, searching for the most ideal implementation timeline. In the end, Glenbrook chose a spring 2018 implementation. Leadership shared the news and timeline with staff, but with a twist: Instead of focusing on the need to adjust to new technology, Glenbrook’s business team presented the switch to Qmlativ as an opportunity for faster, more streamlined processes, substantial enhancements to reporting, and intuitive experiences. Messages were tailored to each group of users based on their duties such as office support staff, administrators, and power users in the business or human resources office. Between hands-on sessions, pre-recorded videos, and a redesigned Professional Development Center, Glenbrook’s team equipped staff with every resource necessary for a smooth implementation.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

So, how has Glenbrook adjusted to its new solution? “Our staff loves the flexibility of Qmlativ,” explained Gravel. “They enjoy the speedy experience of browsing data, and the ability to customize their digital workspace both aesthetically and functionally.”

As for the implementation, Glenbrook’s careful preparation paid off. “Our implementation experience was great,” stated Gravel. Still, any transition to a new technology comes with a learning curve.

“We were SMS experts, and now we are back as novice users,” explained Gravel. “However, as educators, we are committed to being lifelong learners, so we work through each question, each module, one at a time. Over time, we will be Qmlativ experts.”

Overall, Gravel believes the greatest benefit of Qmlativ so far has been enhanced levels of security. When Glenbrook used SMS 2.0, staff gave other team members unnecessary amounts of access to help them get work done. Qmlativ presented an ideal opportunity for the administration to have an honest conversation with staff and make sure each employee had the exact access they needed.

“Qmlativ gave us the ability to re-build our system security profiles and individual user access from the ground up,” said Gravel.

MAPPING OUT THE FUTURE

As Qmlativ continues to expand, Glenbrook looks forward to adding more features to its technology toolkit such as open enrollment and time tracking. Better yet, the district’s business team is heavily involved in providing feedback regarding the user interface of each solution, which Skyward will roll out to school districts later.

“It was awesome sitting at a table this past spring, listening to the stories of our staff, and hearing them explain the goals they have and how Qmlativ gives us the ability to pursue those goals,” stated Gravel. “Skyward has been a true partner — right by our side, eager to learn about our experience, and standing behind their commitment to excellence in support and school software design.”

Technology change can seem daunting, but Gravel insists the benefits far outweigh the costs. “Your school administrative software will evolve to a level that has not been seen in years,” suggested Gravel. “Qmlativ represents years of research and user feedback for what we as educators need in a software solution. While the transition might be scary to think about, the outcome is amazing!”
We talk a lot about examples of user-centered development at Skyward. Now there’s an even easier way for our users to share the great ideas they have for software enhancements.

No one knows their job better than our users, especially regarding challenges and little improvements that might add up to major time savings. By sharing ideas in the Product Ideas Portal, users have a voice for the next enhancement.

The Portal replaces our traditional Request for Enhancement process. Users can find the Portal through the help area of their software and sign in with a Skyward Contact ID. The feedback process is simple:

- **Search for ideas** (or add your own)
- **Vote** for the ones you like best
- **Sign up** to be notified when the enhancement is complete

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- **Search for ideas**
  - Filters in the main screen help rank existing ideas and show the votes they’ve racked up already. “Hot ideas” are generating a lot of buzz recently, while “Top Ideas” have the most votes. Filter by category or hit My Feedback to jump to ideas submitted (note users must sign in to share ideas and view their own).

- **Add ideas and vote**
  - If users find no one else has shared their idea for an enhancement yet, they can add it using the field front and center on the site. As users peruse ideas, they can add votes for the ones they like best. The counter displays the number of user votes each idea has. Feedback helps prioritize future projects and inform development.
  - If a user is particularly excited about an idea, they can subscribe to receive updates when it’s rolled out to users.

- **Guide improvement**
  - The Product Ideas Portal puts the user voice at the center of development to help shape the next generation of Skyward enhancements. Everyone’s ideas and feedback are important, and the portal offers one more way to make your voice heard.
  - As a Qmlativ user, you can start exploring the Product Ideas Portal, sharing your ideas, and voting for others’ suggestions!
Implementing new technology is enticing for many school districts. But before any new technology can be considered, district leaders must clearly identify how it will be used.

Travis McGuire, superintendent at Hinckley-Big Rock Community Unit School District 429 (HBR 429), says the purpose of technology is to be a tool in the learning process. More importantly, a tool which is “driven by the curriculum; enhances student learning; engages students; and improves communication, feedback, or collaboration among all stakeholders.”

HBR 429’s previous student information system didn’t meet that definition, which led the district to search for a new SIS. “We were having trouble with many of our daily functions, which were pretty standard needs for any school district, such as delayed student transcripts,” explained McGuire.

After initial outreach, HBR 429 set up a meeting to preview Qmlativ. With teaching staff, secretaries, and administrators on hand, faculty were quickly on board. By the 2017-2018 school year, the district implemented the Qmlativ Student Management Suite. In doing so, HBR 429 has improved three overarching areas throughout the district: college and career readiness, communication, and support for all stakeholders.

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Since HBR 429’s transition to Qmlativ, transcripts are readily available in the Family Access portal. Students are reaping many benefits beyond just the transcripts. HBR 429 is using Qmlativ to add transparency to the grading process. “Not only am I a superintendent, but I am also a parent in the district,” explained McGuire. “That’s why I’m happy we’ve communicated how to set up cues for low grades or low test scores in Qmlativ.”

Likewise, Qmlativ gives HBR 429 students real-time access to their grades on any device so they can track their progress or communicate with teachers. That type of access will benefit students moving forward, giving them an opportunity to adapt to challenges along the way and use their information for long-term success.
IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

Beyond transcripts and student progress information, Qmlativ is also helping HBR 429 accomplish a more widespread goal. That goal is to improve communication within the district and throughout the entire community. While the district’s previous system had a parent portal, it didn’t have a messaging feature. Even worse, many parents and students found the portal lacked functionality and wasn’t user-friendly.

With Qmlativ, all key stakeholders are more engaged. Students and parents now have access to the solution’s message center, where they can communicate with teachers on recent academic progress and actionable goals. “Our parents and students are better informed and more efficient with Qmlativ,” stated McGuire. “Gathering the latest communication technology has been a great advantage to our district.”

In a broader aspect, HBR 429 highlights its new SIS by informing and educating students and parents on the communication capabilities of Qmlativ. “In the short amount of time we’ve been using Qmlativ, we’ve pushed out all kinds of information to our parents,” said McGuire. “Soon, we will be pushing out information about online registration and how we will be using Skyward for that.”

Internally, HBR 429’s staff enjoys a different side of communication: the ease of sharing and viewing information. “Our staff feels more efficient now that Qmlativ gives them the ability to personalize their tiles and dashboards,” explained McGuire. “They see the information they need, access it quickly, and work confidently knowing that what they see is real-time data.

SUPPORT FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

While Qmlativ’s features and functionality are providing added benefits to the district, McGuire believes the level of support the district has received, both within Qmlativ and outside of it, is invaluable.

“We’ve experienced outstanding customer service and support. It doesn’t matter how good your product is if you don’t have someone or something to help you when you need it most.”

A key part of that support has been Skyward’s Professional Development Center (PDC). While McGuire notes that Qmlativ’s user-friendly interface and intuitive design made their transition easier, having the PDC provided additional benefits. “The PDC format worked well for us,” said McGuire. “It’s such an advantage to try things without any fear of messing up which added to our staff’s level of confidence.”

Moving forward, HBR 429 will also have access to Qmlativ’s Help Center, a self-service support portal. At any time, staff will be able to instantly view relevant content based on their roles and the questions they have. With everything from documentation on a given topic to a video library and flowcharts, HBR 429’s staff will be equipped with the tools and resources they need to work smarter.

CONCLUSION

So, what’s the next step for HBR 429? According to their superintendent, the district will consider making the same improvements to their financial operations. “The next thing we need to contemplate is when to switch to the Qmlativ School Business Suite so our data is all in one database,” said McGuire.

Building a more successful learning environment doesn’t have to be complicated. If you give stakeholders the resources and support they need to become more efficient and collaborative, success will cultivate itself. “Making the move to Qmlativ just makes sense,” explained McGuire. “It makes our district better and improves our students’ learning process. It’s that simple.”
No matter how you choose to grow with Skyward, we’ve made it our mission to deliver a better experience every step of the way. Many training options are available to meet your district and staff’s specific needs. Here are a few of the resources to look forward to in Qmlativ.

**TRAINING OPTIONS**

**1. The Professional Development Center**

The Professional Development Center (PDC) is the ultimate resource for just-in-time refresher courses, advanced mastery lessons, and even certifications as a Skyward expert in specific areas of the software. Take a deep dive into courses tailored to your role to help create a smooth transition to the Qmlativ solution.

**2. The Help Center**

The Help Center is another valuable resource when you’re trying to become more efficient. It’s easy to make the mistake of looking at the center as a support resource only, but it’s much more than that. It’s the collection of every tutorial, flow chart, checklist, and training video we have ever created for the system. Set aside a few minutes every week to dive into a specific topic, and you’ll find yourself getting that time back and more with increased productivity.

**3. Website Toolkits**

If you’re looking to learn more about Family Access, there’s no better resource than our website. Visit skyward.com/toolkit and select your role to access a series of Power UP videos, templates, and handouts. If you want to brush up on what’s available to you in Employee Access, visit skyward.com/employeeaccess for a similar content library.
The Skyward Community

Sometimes the most valuable learning experience is comfort from peers. Did you know you have access to the collective knowledge of thousands of Skyward users from around the world? The Skyward Community is the place to go when you want to bounce ideas off of other people in similar roles with similar responsibilities. One example of a common line of questioning might be, “how does your district manage this requirement in Skyward?” We’re all smarter together, and there’s almost nothing that hasn’t already been done by someone somewhere.

iCon and User Group Conferences

If you prefer to do your learning in person, you’ll have plenty of opportunities to soak in the fun. Intense professional development is offered at state-specific user groups and iCon — our annual conference for the whole Skyward family. You can find the full event calendar at skyward.com/discover, or in the events area of the Community.

Know Your QMLATIV Support Options

HELP CENTER

The Help Center is your number one destination for everything from troubleshooting to step-by-step walkthroughs. Search for the term you need help with and the Help Center will retrieve results in the order of how helpful they’ve been for previous similar searches.

If you are not a designated Skyward support contact for your school or district, reach out to whoever has that responsibility internally. Not sure who that person is? We recommend starting with your technology department.

SUPPORT CONTACT

If you’re a designated Skyward support contact, you can submit a service call in two ways. First, you can submit a ticket from the Help Center by selecting the “Submit Ticket” button located at the top right of the screen and providing some details about your question.

OR

Give us a call at 1-800-236-0001
Let’s say you’re trying to run a process you haven’t touched in months or you’re asked to do something you were never officially trained on. With the Help Center, the first thing you want to do is search for the relevant term. I’ll play the role of a new school office employee tasked with creating schedules for the first time.

I want to keep things simple and I’m not really sure yet what I should be looking for, so I start with the broadest search term I can think of: “scheduling.” This is where the magic happens.

Instead of bringing up a random list of every article containing the term “scheduling,” the Help Center is working behind the scenes to intelligently identify several critical points of information.

THE END RESULT

Some of our readers may remember the days of clunky user manuals and massive online documentation databases. It wasn’t that long ago that this was the norm. But we’ve been listening over the years, and we’ve noticed the recurring theme of, “I know Skyward can do so much for us, but it feels like we’re only scratching the surface.” It’s a statement often followed by something along the lines of, “There are only a handful of people in the district who really know the system well.”

We’ve been grappling with that reality for years, and the move to Qmlativ was an ideal time for us to reexamine our approach. “What if,” we asked ourselves, “we could flip our support model from one in which a handful of contacts at each district acted as the liaison between their staffs and our support team, to one in which every user at every level could easily find the information they needed to complete the task they were working on?”

The whole point of this new Help Center is to tear down some of those boundaries, alleviate the burden on local Skyward administrators, and give people an opportunity to learn what they need to know at the exact time they need to know it. It’s the ideal application for artificial intelligence in that its end goal is to raise the Skyward IQ of everyone who touches it.

It’s no Skynet, but one thing is clear; a better support experience has arrived.
There's an African proverb that says, “If you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, go together.” That’s precisely the idea behind the Skyward Community. Once you make the decision to move to Qmlativ, joining the Skyward Community will allow you to share best practices, bounce ideas off peers, and work together to find the best way to use your new software to tackle the next big objective for your school or district. Want to participate in groups specific to your state reporting needs? Looking to connect with other people who perform the same tasks as you? Interested in learning how to use the software to solve a unique challenge? With the help and guidance of the Community, you’ll no doubt find ways you can maximize your Qmlativ experience. Let’s take a closer look.

Qmlativ Hosting Options
Are you a DIY host, or do you prefer to be hands-off? We’ve got several options when it comes to hosting Qmlativ.

Secure Cloud Hosting
What does it mean to keep your data in the cloud? With our secure hosting service, it means never having to worry about software updates, hardware refreshes, or database maintenance. We’ll back up your data, make sure it’s protected, and lock down access so only you can get to it. This means little to no maintenance on your end, so your technology team can focus on staff and infrastructure.

BASE FEATURES
- Dual-redundant firewalls, BGP failover, and antivirus mitigation
- SQL database licensing
- 24x7 infrastructure monitoring and alarming
- 15-month training database and unlimited test database
- Hands-off hardware upgrades and software updates
- Daily offsite backups
- Maximum RTO 48 hours, RPO 24 hours
- SSAE-16 annual audit and report
- HIPAA certification

OPTIONAL PLATINUM UPGRADE
Includes all base features plus the following:
- Redundant, highly available SAN environment
- Complete disaster recovery services — Maximum RTO 24 hours, RPO 12 hours
- 24x7 live infrastructure help desk
- Unlimited training database and developer database
- Upgrades and updates on your schedule
- Hourly backups, AI logging, and backup retention
- Redundant datacenter
- PCI certification

On-Premise
With this option, all hardware and database services will be in district hands. You will provide your own servers and licensing, fully manage your system, and run all software updates internally. The annual on-premise support agreement will cover phone assistance for Qmlativ configuration questions and troubleshooting.

Managed Services
If you prefer to keep your servers on-site, but would rather have us look after the database, Managed Services is the way to go. We’ll provide the servers for you, along with these ongoing services:
- SQL database licensing
- Database health and performance monitoring and troubleshooting
- Software updates
- Training database refresh

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS
QMLATIV SPOTLIGHT: THE SKYWARD COMMUNITY
BY: LAUREN GILCHRIST
CREATE YOUR PROFILE

Your first step in joining the Skyward Community involves setting up your profile. This is where you can add your photo, share your Skyward expertise if applicable, and write a brief bio so other can get to know you. Your goal is to give the other members of the Community an idea of your role and what you do. This will be important for making connections later. Your profile is also where you’ll be able to view your friends, see your badges, and watch your activity points grow — more on that in just a bit.

EXCHANGE IDEAS

The Discussions area is where you can share ideas with the rest of the Community. A good first move might be posting a message in the Introductions category so people can get to know you. If you find a discussion page that interests you, click on the Subscribe link next to the New Topic button and you’ll be notified of future conversations pertaining to that topic.

You’re welcome to join any conversation. Just click on its title to read it, then click on the Reply button to chime in. We also encourage you to start new conversations about topics that haven’t yet been covered. Say, for example, you’re in charge of payroll and are new to Qmlativ. You’ve explored the PDC and Help Center, so you know how to run payroll, but you want to know if someone from another district has come up with a way to shave off some time. In this case, the Human Resources discussion page would be a great place to post that question and bounce ideas around with colleagues.

EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The Skyward Community also includes a Blogs area. You can think of this section as a digital magazine rack — your one-stop-shop for all the latest news and updates. There are a variety of blogs posted here. Some of them are Skyward-specific (such as state and federal reporting), while others like our Advancing K12 newsletter bring you insight on what’s happening in the world of K-12 leadership, culture, and technology. Browse and enjoy!

GROW YOUR EXPERTISE

If you’re interested in taking a deeper dive into a specific category, you’ll want to check out the Groups area. Groups are essentially “mini communities” where you’ll find information that’s applicable to only a unique subset of users, such as specific state and federal reporting groups. Joining a group gives you access to their resources, discussions, and events. Groups you’ve joined will appear under My Groups. You can view a list of group categories and browse to find any you’d like to join.

MAKE CONNECTIONS

If you want to get the most out of the Skyward Community, the Connect tab is where you can find and connect with other Skyward users. Click on a member’s profile to send them a private message or to add them as a friend. When you add someone as a friend, you’ll be notified of their actions in the Community. Use the Member Search to search by name, role, or location. You can also click on Browse Members to search through a list of Community members.

VIEW EVENTS

The Events area can help ensure you never miss out on a professional development opportunity. Check here for upcoming user groups, webinars, submission deadlines, and more. Use the colored tabs at the top to filter the events by category.

EARN POINTS AND BADGES

Once you’re acquainted with the system, here’s a final point to touch on — a fun opportunity for you to expand your knowledge and spruce up your profile. For every action you perform in the Community, you’ll earn points toward a higher rank. You’ll start as an apprentice, but can work your way up to a specialist, prodigy, master, and guru! You can also complete tasks and participate in events to earn badges for your profile.

The Community is ultimately about people. Make connections. Find the go-to subject-matter experts on all things Qmlativ. And go farther than you ever dreamed was possible with your administrative software.
Change is uncomfortable and oftentimes intimidating. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that most school districts are apprehensive about changing the technology they use every day. That simply isn’t the case at Menasha Joint School District (MJSD), where innovation and change is ingrained in the culture.

Under the leadership of Brian Adesso, director of business services, MJSD’s business office has developed an enthusiasm for improving efficiencies and strengthening culture. That same excitement is why MJSD’s business office readily bought in to the latest financial and human resources technology.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Unlike most districts looking to upgrade business office solutions, MJSD enjoyed its current enterprise resource planning technology and wanted to stay with its current provider. The district, which used Skyward’s web-based platform SMS 2.0 and PaC, a Point-and-Click system, wanted to upgrade to Skyward’s latest solution to position itself for the future and provide the best overall experience for business office personnel.

As Adesso described, the district enjoyed many of SMS 2.0’s benefits. “We loved that employees could use the check estimator to make informed decisions, our business office enjoyed running our training through an online form and being able to record everything, and we were able to turn all of our human resources and vendor files paperless in Skyward.”

Still, MJSD knew that upgrading to Skyward’s latest solution would offer new enhancements such as customization, consolidated systems, greater accessibility, deeper reporting, and a more enjoyable user interface.

“Our business office staff saw that Qmlativ was the future and gave us total buy-in and commitment,” explained Adesso. “They are the type of staff that wants to take full advantage of the solution to make everything more efficient.”

THE SOLUTION

MJSD is making the move to Skyward’s Qmlativ School Business Suite.

“While Qmlativ is developed by programmers, you can tell right away they are doing what the end-user wants by looking at the interface,” stated Adesso. “They are asking districts for input on what it should look like and what they should call things, and that’s been apparent in our first experiences.”

As MJSD prepares their team for the transition to Qmlativ, that enthusiasm will be important to the learning process. The district’s goal is to give staff as much hands-on experience as possible using the system before it’s fully implemented.

So far, MJSD’s team has attended user group sessions, experimented in Qmlativ’s testing environment to learn how certain features work, and will soon be diving into the Professional Development Center (PDC) a training and development portal. In the PDC, staff will take courses on the solutions they’ll be using most often, earn badges, and celebrate their accomplishments together.

“WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT QMLATIV IS THAT IT’S SO CUSTOMIZABLE. EVERYONE LEARNS IN A DIFFERENT WAY AND LOOKS AT THINGS IN A DIFFERENT WAY.”

BRIAN ADESSO, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SERVICES
**INITIAL RESULTS**

**CUSTOMIZATION**

Early in the learning process, MJSD’s team is already finding out how valuable Qmlativ’s flexible architecture and user-friendly design is. With workflow-based solutions, the district’s new hires and current staff are finding that the transition to Qmlativ will be smooth. As an added benefit, Qmlativ will continue to grow and develop with the needs of MJSD’s staff.

“What we love about Qmlativ is that it’s so customizable. Everyone learns in a different way and looks at things in a different way,” Adesso said. “It’s great that the software can be configured for specific people based on the way they like to think and work, and then other staff can have it set up totally different based on their needs.”

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Adesso personally finds the mobility and accessibility of Qmlativ to be the most useful feature. In MJSD’s past experiences, the business office used PaC for some of their business operations. While it was an enjoyable experience, this meant that configuration needed to be done on local machines, which prohibited the district from using multiple work stations. Therefore, when the district wanted to provide mobile access, everything needed to be downloaded ahead of time before PaC could be operational. Once Qmlativ is fully adopted at MJSD, that will be consolidated into one solution.

“In the past, our business office needed to use both PaC and Skyward’s SMS 2.0 web solution to process our payroll,” said Adesso. “Now, we will be more productive and efficient because all of our payroll tools will be consolidated in Qmlativ.”

**REPORTING**

Another feature MJSD’s business office looks forward to using is Qmlativ’s reporting tool. “I’m really excited about the detailed and deep reporting and data gathering you can do with Qmlativ,” explained Adesso. Tie in the product’s high level of accessibility and staff will more easily share data and reports directly from Skyward.

Even better, MJSD’s team will enjoy taking full advantage of the built-in report writer. This means that staff will be able to customize easy-to-read reports for their stakeholders. “I really want to create better reports for the community,” said Adesso. “I want to create more transparency and easier-to-read reports, more appealing reports, and I know that Qmlativ will help us accomplish that goal.”

**OUR BUSINESS OFFICE STAFF SAW THAT QMLATIV WAS THE FUTURE AND GAVE US TOTAL BUY-IN AND COMMITMENT.**

Brian Adesso, Director of Business Services

**MOVING FORWARD**

MJSD’s future-ready journey is already off to an exciting start, and if all goes as planned, soon they’ll be joined by their neighbors. In fact, at least six districts surrounding MJSD are waiting to make the transition to Qmlativ according to Adesso. But that doesn’t come with any added pressure. “We are excited to have the opportunity to pave the way for more Wisconsin districts to make this transition,” explained Adesso.

And when those districts do change over to Qmlativ, Adesso has some welcoming words of advice. “Expect an easier to use, more intuitive experience.”
You saw the demos, you tested the simulations, and you made your decision: you’re ready to make the leap to our new Qmlativ platform. That’s great! But what happens next? For a smooth transition, it helps to begin with the end in mind. That’s why we mapped out the path to a successful launch, including some basic initial steps to be completed nine months, six months, and three months before you go live with Qmlativ.

Our goal is to help you feel comfortable with the established timeline by providing some clarity about what needs to get done and when. Let’s take a closer look at what to expect when you make this transition.

**Project Qmlativ: Establishing Timelines**

**BY CASEY THOMPSON**

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<tr>
<th>9 months</th>
<th>6 months</th>
<th>3 months</th>
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<td><strong>PROJECT MANAGER KICKOFF MEETING</strong>&lt;br&gt;Your project officially begins with the initial kickoff meeting with your project manager. This will be a one-on-one or small group WebEx meeting. Your project manager will be the go-to resource and single point of contact for you to turn to throughout the transition.</td>
<td><strong>REVIEW CURRENT PRODUCTS OWNED AND WHAT WILL BE AVAILABLE</strong>&lt;br&gt;By this time, we’ll have a good idea of what will be available in Qmlativ when you transition. Since the functionality between your existing system and your new Qmlativ system may not be identical, this is a great opportunity to learn about how Qmlativ will meet your unique needs.</td>
<td><strong>REVIEW DATA CLEANUP RECOMMENDATIONS</strong>&lt;br&gt;They say a transition is the best opportunity to ditch bad habits. We’ll work together to review data cleanup recommendations and help you move forward with more consistent and standardized data practices. The ultimate goal is a seamless, error-free data migration.</td>
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<td><strong>SET UP QMLATIV SANDBOX ENVIRONMENT</strong>&lt;br&gt;This is the first official step on our end toward getting your new system up and running. We can’t wait to start personalizing the Qmlativ environment for your district’s unique needs.</td>
<td><strong>ESTABLISH “GO LIVE” DATE FOR MIGRATION</strong>&lt;br&gt;Based on our estimates for training and conversion times, you’ll work together with your project manager to establish a “go live” date. It helps to keep your end goal in mind and work backwards from there to make sure you’re on track for the target date.</td>
<td><strong>CREATE REPORTS IN SANDBOX FOR IMPORT INTO QMLATIV</strong>&lt;br&gt;Your custom reports are one thing that won’t be moved over to Qmlativ during the conversion process. This is a great opportunity for staff to dig into Qmlativ’s flexible report writer to create their go-to reports, customize and brand them, and have them ready for import when you go live in the new system. We’ve also seen districts use this time to identify which reports are no longer necessary and do a little cleanup.</td>
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<td><strong>RECEIVE DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION</strong>&lt;br&gt;You provide us with the contact information for people at your district who will receive access to the Qmlativ sandbox. Those individuals can share the credentials with anyone else who wants to get their feet wet.</td>
<td><strong>BEGIN TRAINING STAFF WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER</strong>&lt;br&gt;Included for all Qmlativ customers, the PDC is a hub for all setup and training processes. Your professional development coordinator can assign self-paced courses, which use videos, tutorials, workflow charts, and tests to prepare your staff. We built this PDC admin site to help your point-person lay out your team’s steps to success.</td>
<td><strong>CONFIRM “GO LIVE” DATE</strong>&lt;br&gt;This is a final opportunity to review last-minute questions and fine-tune the details before you go live with Qmlativ! Typically, student management migrations happen in the summer, and school business migrations happen at the start of a quarter.</td>
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<td><strong>CREATE SANDBOX AT ISCORP</strong>&lt;br&gt;Our hosting service, ISCorp, will house the sandbox that allows you to offer early access to Qmlativ and enable your staff to orient themselves in the software.</td>
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<td><strong>REQUEST BACKUP OF CURRENT LIVE DATABASE</strong>&lt;br&gt;We understand how important it is to maintain detailed records and to transfer all essential data. We’ll ask for a backup of your current live database to aid in a smoother transition.</td>
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Once you’ve made the decision to move to Qmlativ, how do you communicate important information about your new SIS with staff and parents within the district?

From accessing toolkits and training/support options to connecting with other Skyward users, our new customer resource microsite puts the information at your fingertips to ensure a seamless transition while keeping everyone connected.

Visit skyward.com/start to learn more.