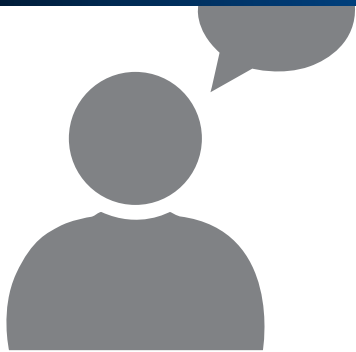




Saving time and reducing costs with Skyward



Allentown School District | Allentown, Pennsylvania

Enrollment: 17,000+ | Schools: 22 | Implemented: 2009

Keeping the fifth largest school district in the state of Pennsylvania running smoothly is no easy task. With 17,500 students, 2,200 employees, 16 elementary schools, four middle schools, and two high schools, Allentown School District faced significant operational changes on a weekly basis.

The district has been able to stay ahead of the curve thanks to a lot of hard work, a devoted staff, and the efficiencies they've been able to uncover with the Skyward School Business Suite.

The Challenge

Prior to 2009, the Allentown School District used an outdated legacy system that could no longer keep up with the district's burgeoning demands.

"We were using a text-based system," explained Mark McKenzie, project manager of HR/finance software for Allentown School District. "Without a graphical user interface, the system was difficult to use – particularly for new employees. Many of our processes were also performed manually, which led to a number of inefficiencies across the district, and we dealt with a number of headaches associated with hardware problems, backup failures and software upgrades."

Allentown's system was doing nothing to help reduce the stress of tight budgets, diminished head counts, and a constant push for more visibility and streamlined communication.

The Solution

Allentown was in search of a new, easy-to-use and easy-to-implement system that would automate many of its business processes district-wide, thus reducing costs and mitigating the amount of time employees were forced to devote to such tasks.

The district wanted a system that all employees would be able to easily access from anywhere on the Web. Finally, the district's

ideal system would need to be delivered in such a way that the district's IT staff could avoid the inherent risks of hardware failure and missed software updates.

Allentown chose the Skyward School Business Suite, in part because Skyward had a plan to move the bulk of its solution to the Web more quickly than other vendors in the marketplace.

The Results

Today, Allentown School District relies on the Skyward School Business Suite to manage and optimize the district's financial and human resources processes. By investing in the Skyward solution, Allentown has eliminated the aggravation that stems from hassles using complex tools for basic tasks such as managing budgets, generating state reports, and tracking personnel records.

Allentown was quick to take advantage of the majority of the Suite's features. Benefits including the suite's ease-of-use, decreased time to complete tasks, and lower overhead costs now help keep the district running smoothly.

Ease-of-use with web-based system

According to McKenzie, the difference between Allentown's legacy program and the new Skyward solution was night and day. "It was very difficult for new users to get up to speed quickly on the old system. With Skyward, the change has been dramatic; Skyward is so much easier to learn. Anyone familiar with a GUI or web browser can jump right in; it is an intuitive browsing experience."

The web-based solution also enabled access anytime, anywhere—an impossibility with Allentown's previous system. This feature became especially useful in the event that a staff member worked from home or was away from the office when an

“We are able to focus our attention back where it should be.”

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SKYWARD®

Success Story

emergency arose; the School Business Suite was immediately accessible via any computer, tablet, or phone with an Internet connection.

Automation increases efficiency, saves time, and reduces costs

The Skyward School Business Suite automated many of Allentown's business processes that were once performed manually, saving the district both time and resources.

Online access to personnel information

Since implementing Skyward, Allentown has stopped printing direct deposit notices. Instead, employees login from their own device and print their deposit information via Employee Access.

"That has proven to be a major cost saver for us," said McKenzie. "Before Skyward, we were printing somewhere around 2,400 print stubs every two weeks. And many of those had to be mailed. On top of the printing and postage costs, we needed dedicated resources to do all of that work – printing the stubs, stuffing the envelopes, etc. The cost savings around that entire process has been significant."

Employees can now access their own HR records, W2 information, payment history, and time-off records through Employee Access. "Empowering our employees with this ability has really freed the Human Resources staff from answering questions so they can focus on more important business," McKenzie noted. In just one example of the ability to reduce operating costs with Skyward, the switch to online forms and paperless paychecks has saved the district an estimated \$132,000 a year.

Substitute tracking

Thanks to the substitute tracking feature, Allentown is now able to track detailed information about its substitutes including which days they subbed, who they subbed for, and their pay rate. This feature is particularly important because the amount that substitute teachers are paid is dependent on how many times they sub for the district throughout the year. For example, after a teacher has subbed three times, he or she moves into a new salary tier.

"Before Skyward, all of that information was tracked manually," explained McKenzie. "The payroll department would physically

keep track of the number of days off with index cards and manually calculate every sub's pay each payroll run. With Skyward, that entire process is now automated. Subs claim days in a third-party system called AESOP and the AESOP data is then imported electronically into Skyward. The system automatically accounts for any changes in pay scale, and the payroll system automatically accesses the data when needed. That has saved everyone involved in the process a lot of time and effort."

Employee management

Before implementing the Skyward system, the district also had to manually enter employee salaries and manually transition them from one category to the next. The potential for human error was always present, especially during the year-end process when new teachers were hired and others left.

Now that Allentown uses the Employee Management module, the district can "roll" employees from one step on a salary matrix to another. This feature not only saves time; it also reduces the potential for error. McKenzie

is pleased with the module's ease-of-use. "The salary matrix automatically updates any new information, and will prorate an annual salary to the portion owed to new employees or an

employee leaving the district," he said.

Purchasing

Prior to Skyward, if a principal wanted to submit an order, the secretary would type the requisition and it would be passed by hand until it finally reached the business office. At that point, the purchasing secretary would re-key everything into the system. With the Skyward School Business Suite, the building secretaries can now enter the requisition directly into Skyward where it is sent directly to the appropriate party for approval and submission. By switching to online requisitions, Allentown is saving an estimated \$150,700 each year.

Empowering schools

Skyward has reduced the number of tasks at the business-office level. "We have been able to push a lot of processes out to the schools themselves," explained McKenzie. "They can submit their own purchase requests directly into Skyward, enter their own budget transfers, monitor their own budgets, and more. That ability accelerates all of the various processes, reducing the time and resources involved."

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The benefits of software as a service

After dealing with all the headaches of managing their previous legacy system in-house, McKenzie said the Software as a Service (SaaS)-based Skyward system has been a wonderful change. “Not having to worry about managing the software and hardware – the bug patches, upgrades, unexpected issues— has been great,” McKenzie said. “We are able to focus all of our attention back where it should be: serving the needs of the district. And we also know we are always getting access to the latest and greatest Skyward has to offer. As soon as a patch is ready, we receive it within a day or two. With SaaS, we will never

again fall behind when it comes to software versions or new features and functionality. And we are saving costs by no longer having to buy and maintain the software and hardware, maintain disaster recovery backup or employ an in-house IT resource.”

According to McKenzie, Skyward has truly had a profound impact on the district. “If I snapped my fingers and the Skyward School Business Suite went away, we would be dead in the water. Just about everything we do at a business level flows through that system. Not only would I recommend Skyward to another district, but I already have.”

“*We know we are always getting the latest and greatest Skyward has to offer.*”



To learn more about how Skyward can help you and your staff be the driving force behind a more productive, collaborative, and successful environment, visit www.skyward.com or contact an industry specialist today at 800-236-7274.