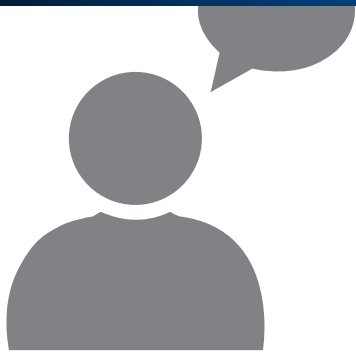




Texas district transformed by Skyward's SIF-compliant Student Management Suite



Alvarado Independent School District | Alvarado, Texas
Enrollment: 3,350 | Schools: 6 | Implemented: 2005

Alvarado may be the oldest city in Johnson County, Texas but it is at the forefront when it comes to education technology. That was not always the case for this small, southern school district.

The Challenge

For many years, Alvarado Independent School District used a combination of manual processes and limited automation to update and manage student information across various systems. The administrative staff realized they needed to find a less time-consuming and more cost-effective way to accomplish these tasks.

That's when they found Skyward.

The Solution

After careful review of a number of different systems and vendors, the administrators and technology department at Alvarado ISD were in agreement that the Skyward Student Management Suite was the right choice. They were ready for a system that would increase efficiency and bring the district up to date with a cutting edge student information system.

The Alvarado ISD staff knew their system would need to align with the Student Interoperability Framework (SIF), a data-sharing open specification for K-12 academic institutions. SIF, which enables diverse applications to interact and share data, is an industry initiative, not an independent product. SIF is composed of two parts: an XML specification for modeling educational data and a Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) specification for sharing that data between institutions.

By choosing the SIF-certified Student Management Suite, the district would realize many benefits, namely the ability to eliminate redundant data entry, increase efficiency, and enhance software compatibility among its systems.

"A student management system by itself is just another database out on your network to manage. But a student management system with SIF interoperability is the powerhouse that can run your whole network for you," Berger stressed.

In addition to its SIF-compliant system, Skyward's sole focus on schools played a role in the district's decision-making process. "Schools are Skyward's only business," Berger said. "A lot of times when you look at student management systems out there, they are a subset of a bigger company that does all of these other things and that have their hands in lots of different areas. At Skyward, schools are their business and that's it."

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The Results

When the Alvarado ISD began to analyze and discuss ways to improve its systems, the administrators were initially looking for a better way to blend existing processes within the old system. Berger recognized that Skyward offered a new and better answer: a

single database to run all of the applications, which would leave the district with just one source to work with.

Berger noted that Skyward possessed more intrinsic capabilities than he could have ever gotten out of the old system. "These were just critically important things that I couldn't get out of my old application and still today can't get out of that application. But right out of the box I had that with Skyward."

For Berger and Alvarado ISD, the key is having SIF operability with the Skyward Student Management System. "There is no better source of authority for a school district than your student management system. With Skyward, I have one source of authority for my HR information, payroll, accounting, and student information.

SKYWARD®

Success Story

I have one spot to change it and one spot to add it, and I know that all of my information is good everywhere on the network.”

A user-friendly system

Berger believes that Skyward is set apart from other SIF vendors because of the quality of the company’s programming. “Skyward has a SIF interface that’s already built in and that’s very advanced and user friendly. It’s very easy to use and it allows us to bring in applications ourselves. We can just go in and select our elements and be done. This is a very strong point for Skyward in the SIF area.

Greater flexibility and streamlined processes

He also noted that Skyward’s interface has more flexibility than any other interface in any other system he has ever seen. “And it has continued to evolve as the program grows and advances with SIF,” he added.

Thanks to Skyward’s advanced SIF configuration, the Alvarado ISD is able to distribute data from the student information system to all other applications on the network, increasing its cross-platform efficiencies. “This configuration has allowed us to streamline many of our business processes including scheduling, grading, attendance and health information,” Berger said.

Quantifiable savings in time and cost

As a result of implementing the Skyward Student Management Suite into a SIF-based infrastructure, the Alvarado ISD has saved numerous hours in personnel time. Berger said the district has shortened the time needed to perform record-keeping tasks such as file updates when students move from one campus to another. The change has been dramatic—reducing tasks which took long as five days to as little as six seconds.

The cost savings from implementing the Skyward Student Management Suite have also been significant. “Our first year alone with SIF, just on a network account basis managing students, we saved more than \$16,000 in personnel time,” Berger said. “And that was a one-to-one application. Every time we add another application, that figure just starts to double.” In addition, when calculating time spent by staff related to their daily compensation rate, Alvarado ISD estimates \$5 in savings every time a student enrolls and \$2 when a student withdraws. During the summer the district saves \$1,400 when preparing for students to move from one

campus to another. When students graduate, Skyward saves the district \$400 in comparison to the previous system.

Increased efficiency puts focus back on academics

Berger says that his department is now able to add more value to the district as a result of the SIF implementation with Skyward. “We have a lot of new applications that we are doing now that we wouldn’t have been able to do in the past because of the time constraints of our day-to-day processes. To do what we are doing now without SIF would require more staffing just because of the automation that it has done for us.”

The SIF implementation with Skyward has also benefited the Alvarado ISD by enabling it to streamline numerous processes and, as a result, free up more employee time. Berger believes

this change has enabled the district to focus on its mission. “This has allowed us to open doors to other opportunities in our district and to focus more on educating our kids.”

“These were just critically important things that I couldn't get out of my old application... but right out of the box I had that with Skyward.”

” In addition, Berger

points out that the district has been able to put greater focus on technology integration in the classroom since staff members are no longer tied up with data entry tasks. This change has allowed students to gain an additional 5 days of computer instruction each year.

Skyward Technology + Support = A Winning Formula

Looking back, Berger said it was a very easy decision to choose Skyward’s student management system. “Skyward’s interface and technology were hands-down way beyond anything else that was out there.”

Berger also said that Skyward’s customer relations and support have been the best of any product or of any kind of student management system that he has ever worked with in education. “I get instant feedback if I make a call or place an online work ticket. And Skyward continually gives us SIF updates and software updates.”

Berger is confident that Alvarado ISD’s decision to use Skyward was the right choice to make. “I’ve been very pleased with Skyward... and their dedication to schools is just a very important thing.”

SIF is a registered trademark of the Schools Interoperability Framework Association.



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.