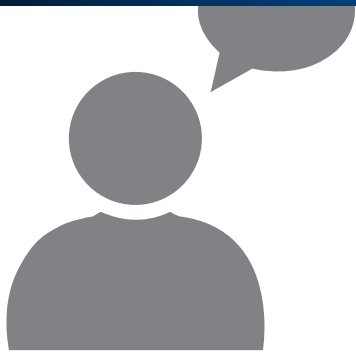




Michigan School District Modernizes Business Office with New ERP Solution

Northwest Community School District saves \$100,000 per year and four days of processing with Skyward's Qmlativ Education Management System



Northwest Community School District | Jackson, Michigan

Enrollment: 3,550 | Employees: 360 | Schools: 5 | Implemented: 2022

In a school district, there is perhaps no other department that understands “time is money” more than the business office.

For Northwest Community School District (NWCS) in Jackson, Michigan, an outdated ERP system that required a lot of manual work was costing the district time and money, holding them back from reaching department and district goals.

When it came time to replace the dated software, Emili Jones, director of business and finance at NWCS, had previous experience using Skyward, and began assisting the district in choosing Skyward's newest solution to streamline their business processes.

Out with the old

Prior to implementing Qmlativ, NWCS' business office was stuck completing most processes by hand.

“One of my employees had a physical paper calendar for every employee in the district to track their time off, which was like a part-time job in itself,” said Jones. “We

were looking for a more robust program that allowed us to move processes — such as time off — online.”

Additionally, NWCS' old system didn't have a good way to clean up data.

“Ultimately, the system didn't match where we saw the finance department going, especially when compared to what other districts in Michigan are doing,” said Jones. “We were ready to move out of 1985 and into the 2020s.”

When NWCS decided to switch ERP systems, Jones reached out to various companies for RFPs. Skyward's Qmlativ solution

was in line with others price-wise, but had something others didn't — it was designed specifically for school districts.

“My previous experience using Skyward helped push them to the top of our options, but their focus on school districts definitely made our decision easier,” said Jones.

Once fully deciding on Qmlativ, NWCS was quick to get started on using their new solution.

In with the new

NWCS's implementation process was very quick, taking place between January and July 1, 2022.

“I couldn't imagine implementing in a shorter timeframe, but overall the process went great,” said Jones.

To get up and running, Jones and her team held a lot of meetings, including discussions with a group from Skyward who would check in often to ensure they were on task.

“We wanted our go-live to go as smoothly as possible, so we were very diligent about completing any back-end work during implementation,” said Jones. “It was a lot of work, and a lot of hours, but was definitely worth it in the end. I think that for me, having some background knowledge with Skyward helped with knowing some of Skyward's terms and codes.”

Once implemented, it was time to train her team on how to use their new system. Jones used both Skyward and internal resources to help her team learn Qmlativ. For initial trainings, they looked to Skyward's Knowledge Hub.

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Success Story

"We sent out trainings to the primary staff that would be utilizing the program the most, such as building secretaries and principals," said Jones. "Whether they used the Knowledge Hub or not, the tools were provided to help those individuals be successful."

For other staff members, Jones' team found the 60 Second Power-Up videos from Skyward helpful.

"We found that our staff tend to bypass information if it's more than 20 words or more than a minute, so these short videos that quickly showed how to, for example, put in a time-off request, were perfect," said Jones.

For longer processes within Skyward, Jones created an internal manual complete with screen shots and other media.

"Skyward does have manuals like this available, which I used to make a document specific for our district and the modules we use," said Jones. "It was a little time consuming to create, but I think on the back end it really helped our employees use this system in a way where they felt competent and not having to reach out with questions too often."

With the help from Skyward and Jones, NWCS quickly found some favorite features within Qmlativ once they were up and running.

Significant savings

Since implementing Qmlativ, NWCS staff were excited to find that the system matched their department goals of streamlining processes.

"We have really been able to put the accountability back in the hands of the people using the system, such as having our users go in and get a copy of their pay stub or W2 without contacting the main office," said Jones. "It's not like we don't enjoy communicating with our team, but eliminating unnecessary communication opens up spaces to share more important things."

The district also saw other significant benefits with Qmlativ — it saves the district time and money.

"The biggest place we see time and money savings is for our payroll processor; it's absolutely mind-blowing to me," said Jones. "We have eliminated almost all paper timesheets, which used to take the person in that role almost four days to complete. Now, we have our payroll submitted by Tuesday afternoon."

Since the payroll processes became less cumbersome and more seamless, payroll duties are now handled in less time by fewer people than in previous years.

"With salary and benefits, we are looking at \$100,000 in savings in our department every single year — that's huge," said Jones.

Jones and her team are excited to continue to strategize and use the modules Qmlativ provides as much as possible to see how they can further benefit their district.

Advice for others

For other districts interested in making the move to Qmlativ, Jones stresses the importance of organization prior to implementation.

"Make sure you're doing your homework to meet deadlines," said Jones. "The more that you do on the back end before you go live, the better it will be going forward."

Jones also suggests working closely with Skyward to ensure things go smoothly.

"Build a strong relationship with your project manager(s), because they are part of your team and are there to fight for you," said Jones. "Skyward is truly there to help, and they want to make sure you have a seamless transition as much as you do."

Skyward and NWCS look forward to further streamlining their business office and saving the district time and money.

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