



CASE STUDY: Washington School Information Processing Cooperative, WA

Numerous needs for each of the districts the Washington School Information Processing Cooperative serves exist. In the determination of meeting these unique needs, SIF was chosen as a solution offering for interoperability.

Overview of Problem

The Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC) is a unique public agency formed by school districts and private schools in the State of Washington to share software development and hardware costs and provide centralized technological support. One of the applications available through the Cooperative is Skyward's Student Management Suite and School Business Suite. The data services provided via the Cooperative include federal and state reports, ad hoc data reporting, and a team of professionals who work with the state to ensure compliance with legislative data mandates. Each of these services is based upon the needs of the schools they serve. Several school districts were looking for ways to solve their integration pains although the pain points differed from district to district. For the larger school districts, doing things in a traditional manner were causing many issues from tracking data, to integration of numerous software applications, to upgrading software. For some of the smaller school districts, the staff was smaller, often over-tasked and subject to significant risks. For example, in one school district the amount of work piling up for the technical administrator that could not be addressed if a bulk of his time was spent managing network accounts. Imagine that in other districts, it's not uncommon for this network administrator to be a teacher. Over-tasking this individual in similar ways would negatively impact classroom instruction.

Demographic Information of Implementation

Another data service provided by WSIPC is consultation on integrating data across multiple systems. It is this set of expertise that has realized valuable results for their member districts when using SIF.

WSIPC, in their SIF Implementation, serves:

- 8 school districts
- rural, urban and suburban
- student population size ranges from 1,000 students to 25,000 students

Technical Solution and Applications

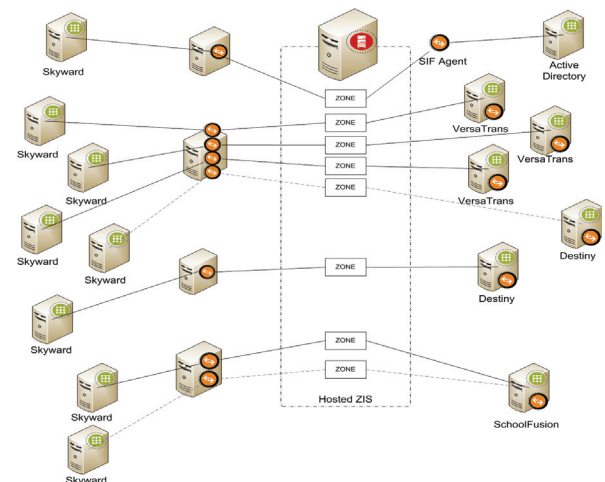
Numerous needs for each of the districts WSIPC serves exist. In the determination of meeting these unique needs, SIF was chosen as a new solution offering for interoperability. WSIPC partnered with Edustructures to add SIFWorks Zone Integration Server (ZIS) licensing to their cooperative mix.

In 2004, first two large school districts were chosen as beta sites for SIF Zones. Edustructures' SIFWorks® Zone Integration Server (ZIS), Versatrans RP and Follett Destiny were the first applications in the SIF Implementation. Once the beta was implemented, WSIPC and the school districts never looked back.

Since the beta, there have been 8 zones established supported by the ZIS that WSIPC hosts for school districts. Each zone correlates with one of the school districts. WSIPC provides all of the integration and SIF services for each of the school districts with a

SIF Implementation.

Each district has some applications that are similar and some that are unique. The applications included in the SIF Implementation currently include Skyward PaC, Edustructures SIFWorks ZIS, Versatrans RP, SchoolFusion Complete, Follett Destiny and Microsoft Active Directory.



There has been a ground swell movement in Washington around SIF. School districts are more aware of SIF and are asking for implementations.

Benefits Achieved and Results

Both WSIPC and its school districts with deployed SIF Zones have realized significant benefits. First, it has been easier on the school districts with the services provided by WSIPC. The districts no longer have to focus on integration between applications. In preparation for implementation, WSIPC provides SIF project planning, integrates Skyward PaC for the district, and works closely with other vendors to guide the district through implementation. After implementation, WSIPC provides monitoring, troubleshooting and support on behalf of the district as a standard service; helping insure continuous error-free performance.

As a result of SIF, many of the business processes have been established or changed based upon data collection, maintenance and the overall data management processes. Districts weren't always aware of what had occurred. In addition, the districts have become even more aware of the importance of data quality.

Finally, time efficiencies have been actualized. For example, there was one staff member— supporting a student enrollment between 16,000-18,000—who would arrive at the school building an hour and a half early twice a week, simply to process data loads, bring in the data, and resolve data discrepancies. Upon implementing SIF, the staff member no longer has to perform this task; realizing a 3 hour time savings per week.

Lessons Learned

The list of WSIPC best practices for ensuring successful SIF Zone implementations include the following:

- Provide school and district personnel with the necessary training to allow them to incorporate the advantages introduced by SIF technology directly into their data management business processes.
- When adding additional SIF-certified applications, deploy them first in a "Test Zone" environment to allow any necessary adjustments to be made, before placing them in actual production.
- Develop a true working partnership with the SIF software product vendors, and provide coherent feedback about problems as they are encountered. This is especially important during "special processing" situations such as end of year rollover and when deploying software upgrades.
- Establish and maintain relationships with other states and districts implementing SIF solutions by actively participating in the end user activities of the SIF Association. This offers opportunities for training and collaboration, and a mutually beneficial exchange of techniques and vendor information.

Next Steps

WSIPC's next steps include five overarching pieces. First, WSIPC will survey the districts that currently have SIF Implementations to find out where SIF can alleviate additional problems. Second, WSIPC has discussed "sandbox" testing for new agents in which their districts have interest. One example is upcoming testing for Xperts IEP Online which would improve data quality and data availability for more than a dozen school districts. Other testing involves an array of 2.x certified agents.

Next, WSIPC will work with the solution vendors that do not currently have agents to develop the necessary agents, supporting the broader integration needs of installed districts.

In addition, WSIPC's SIF implementations will expand to additional districts. There has been a ground swell movement around SIF and school districts are more aware of SIF and asking for implementations.

Lastly, it should go without saying that WSIPC strives to help districts educate themselves with SIF. This is evidenced by their decision to purchase a bulk buy so school districts and regional educational agencies could have membership in SIF Association to learn more about its potential in improving interoperability.

About the SIF Association

The SIF Association is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of over 2,200 schools, districts, states, U.S. Department of Education, International Ministries of Education, software vendors and consultants who collectively define the rules and regulations for educational software data interoperability. The SIF Implementation Specification enables diverse applications to interact and share data and information efficiently, reliably, and securely regardless of the platform hosting those applications. The SIF Association has united these education technology end users and providers in an unprecedented effort to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach. For further information, visit <http://www.sifassociation.org>.



1090 Vermont Avenue NW
Sixth Floor
Washington, DC 20005-4095

Main +1.202.789.4460
Fax +1.202.289.7097

www.sifassociation.org