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SIFA Success Story

Implementation Demographic Information:

Name of school or district: St. Lucie County Public Schools

Location (including state): Ft. Pierce, FL

Enrollment count: **31,000**

Number of buildings involved: Districtwide – 39 schools

St. Lucie County Schools is the 26th largest school district in Florida, 120 miles north of Miami. It is also the third fastest growing area in the state, with about 3,500 employees and 31,000 students in 39 schools. One of the main goals in the district is to provide equitable access to technology.

Problem to be solved/Pain points:

How does a school district struggling with an exploding population with the same number of IT staff keep up with the demand of an ever-expanding school population? One way is to automate procedures that were once a tedious manual process, such as network account creation for staff and students. David Jasa, Director of MIS, has long been a supporter of the Schools Interoperability Framework. He sees SIF as a solution the district can use to remove the redundant data entry that happens in every school, allowing staff to be more efficient with their jobs and serving students in a more direct manner with the time saved.

Solutions:

Since the district had a partial implementation of Visual CASEL for the secondary schools, they realized that a standardized Active Directory and was a good place to start with SIF. To complete the process, they standardized their entire network using VC Lite. This tool, which is similar to Visual CASEL, handles the network administration tasks involved with a Windows 2000 network, including home directories, shares and permissions through a graphical interface. It gave school technology coordinators the ability to see and administer just their school without the need of the MMC tool.

What applications were integrated together? (Give any applicable details)

The MIS Department uses CrossPointe's student information system called TERMS on an IBM Multiprise 2003 mainframe. It also houses the district database for their human resources and finance. St. Lucie also houses and supports district data for the neighboring School Board of Okeechobee County. At this time, a SIF agent has not been developed by CrossPointe, so the district turned to CPSI's SIF-Connect Universal Agent product to automate the create of network accounts in a batch process using the SIF standards. Now the district has a way to pass staff and student data to other SIF-enabled applications.

One of the challenges to this project was the ability to pass a password via SIF. The SIF organization is now addressing the issue. Due to security purposes, the password was not being passed via the student personal record. This type of information needs to be passed in a secure manner so that districts can achieve a single sign-on model. Once a solution is incorporated into the SIF standards, it will be incorporated into St. Lucie's solution.



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The key to St. Lucie's success was the ability to extract the data they needed from their student information system. Once the file extractions were established and tested, the automated process was placed in full production mode. Now staff network accounts are created in the proper organizational as soon as an employee is hired or transfers to a new location. Student accounts are created as soon as the student registers for school.

Follow Up/Results:

Jasa hopes to add other applications once the school year settles. Student account automation is a priority for ease of account movement between schools and automated rosters. "As more products use SIF, it's going to have a massive impact on productivity in the schools," states Jasa. They also hope to implement an agent for their food service application. The district began deploying a new food service application over the summer and they hope to use a SIF agent to pass data between the student information system and the food service application. They are currently waiting for the addition of the free and reduced lunch codes that are soon to be added to the SIF specifications.