



Microsoft Online Services Customer Solution Case Study

Customer: Marion County Public Schools
Web Site: www.marion.k12.fl.us
Customer Size: 6,000 employees
Country or Region: United States
Industry: Education

Customer Profile

Based in Ocala, Florida, Marion County Public Schools includes 48 schools serving 42,000 students.

Software and Services

- Services
 - Microsoft Live@edu
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Identity Lifecycle Manager 2007
- Technologies
 - Active Directory Domain Services
 - GALSync 2010

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High School Students Adopt Online Collaboration Tools, Improve Performance

“Live@edu extends the boundaries of our school to promote the exchange of ideas. It provides accessibility and mobility in learning and is a great motivator for our students.”

Cynthia Saunders, Principal, Lake Weir High School

Marion County Public Schools in Florida wanted a collaborative solution to support innovative teaching methods and offer twenty-first century communication skills to students. It chose Microsoft Live@edu for a managed, safer e-mail service and other collaboration tools such as online storage. Teachers and students are using the services to drive excitement in the classroom, inspire better study habits, and improve student performance.

Business Needs

Marion County Public Schools, located in north central Florida, supports 48 schools and 42,000 students. Lake Weir High School is one of eight high schools in the district, with approximately 1,700 students. “At Lake Weir, our objective is to fully prepare students for either the world of work or the world of study,” says Principal Cynthia Saunders. “To achieve this goal, we want our students to work collaboratively with teachers and peers using technologies they will encounter when they graduate.”

However, students were unable to collaborate or access online class material when outside of school. “A lot of our students don’t have computers, e-mail addresses, or Internet access at home,” says Chris

Youmans, Library Media Specialist at Lake Weir. “Unlike their peers, who have laptops or netbooks, these students could only access their files from a computer in the school lab or the media center.”

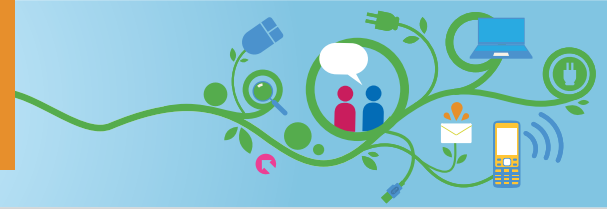
The absence of a district-sponsored collaboration system and unequal access to network resources reduced the impact of innovative instructional methods at Lake Weir. English teacher Chris Roy had stimulated his students’ interest in literature by introducing multimedia to his classroom. “Students were arriving at class 20 minutes early to use the computers to collaborate on their projects. Those students with their own computers and Internet access at home could continue the collaboration outside the classroom, while others couldn’t.”

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"We needed a cost-effective solution that would integrate with the Active Directory Domain Services accounts that we had set up for our students while providing the security we needed to ensure the students' safety and privacy," says Scott Hansen, Chief Information Officer for Marion County Public Schools.

Solution

Lake Weir High School was the first school in the district to take advantage of Microsoft Live@edu, the free, hosted communication and collaboration solution that Marion County Public Schools chose. With Live@edu, all Lake Weir students have access to a world-class e-mail service and online storage and collaboration tools over any Internet connection. Each student is provided a 10-gigabyte Microsoft Office Outlook Live inbox and 25 gigabytes of Windows Live SkyDrive online storage. Students can use other Live@edu applications to collaborate on school projects in real-time virtual meetings over the Internet, and to access class materials, whether they are in or outside of school.

"Live@edu uses a number of our existing resources at no cost to the school district," says Hansen. "Our IT department has implemented the tools using individual student Active Directory accounts, creating a seamless transition to the new services."

Tools such as Microsoft Identity Lifecycle Manager 2007 and GALSync 2010 helped the IT department integrate Live@edu with an existing Active Directory structure. "These tools automated the entire process," says Nick Fields, Senior Network Analyst, Marion County Public Schools. "It took us roughly a day of testing to get the majority of the Active

Directory accounts synchronized with Live@edu."

Lake Weir created approximately 1,800 accounts for students and for teaching and administrative staff members. It helped prepare students for using the online services by providing informational hand-outs and online tutorials. Following the successful implementation of Live@edu at Lake Weir, Marion County Public Schools is planning to deploy the suite of services to all high schools in the district. In fact, says Hansen, "The seamless integration, the managed e-mail account, and access to online resources make Live@edu a resource that all secondary school systems should consider."

Benefits

The Microsoft Live@edu solution offers Lake Weir High School teachers a rich set of communication and collaboration tools to support innovative learning techniques. Students have embraced the online applications for class projects and are building the right skill set for the work force or university. IT staff are using built-in tools to help protect the privacy and online safety of their users. The overall result shows better study habits and performance among students.

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Increased Excitement About Learning

For Roy, Live@edu offers tools that complement his multimedia approach to teaching literature. "With Live@edu, students are more excited and involved in their projects," he says. "They use their

Live@edu accounts to send e-mail and collaborate on work outside of school. They're even brainstorming ideas at home with their parents. The parents love it."

Improved Collaboration

Live@edu is making life a lot easier for student Casey Gilbert. "Now when we work on projects, we're not all crammed around one computer," he says. "I used to forget my papers all the time, and so I'd get a 'zero' grade," Gilbert admits. "Now I send my projects to my teachers in e-mail, and I save everything to SkyDrive."

Safer School Communications

Live@edu offers a safer online environment in which teachers and students can build trusting learning relationships. "In the past, you would never give a student your personal e-mail, but Live@edu is a safer online environment where we can communicate the way teachers and students are supposed to," says Roy.

Better Academic Results

According to Lake Weir teachers, since deploying Live@edu, students are more motivated, are performing better, and take more responsibility for their work. "Live@edu provides more of a college environment, and the students love that," says Saunders. "Now they can access assignments and send e-mail to their teachers anytime. The students recognize this is the way of the future, and they are thrilled to be part of the process."