

Michigan district saves \$400,000 with Google Apps Education Edition

Free suite of email and other productivity tools help streamline a district's IT services

In June 2008, Ken Lupo, director of technology for Saline, Mich., Area Schools, was leaving frequent voicemails asking his district's 600 employees to empty their inboxes to free email storage space. The email system the district had relied on for years was simply not able to manage or store all the email for faculty and staff.

"Just keeping mailboxes under quota was a full time job," Lupo recalls. "Combined with the need to deal with upgrades, viruses, spam and spyware, the IT team was spending up to three days each week maintaining our email services."

Lupo and District Superintendent Scot Graden wanted a better solution, one that would work in the short term by providing more storage and in the long term by delivering ongoing value while keeping costs down. "We didn't want to sign up for a product that would be outdated or require license updates that cost us time and money each year," Graden says.

After looking into a variety of paid and open source options, Graden and Lupo decided to migrate staff and faculty accounts to Google Apps Education Edition – a free, no-ad implementation of Google Apps that includes email, shared calendaring, online documents, a website creation application, video and other applications.

Using the migration tools included in Google Apps, they easily deployed 700 accounts in just two months, and immediately saw the difference. Not only did Google Apps help the IT team reclaim two to three days of email maintenance each week, it also instantly lowered the levels of spam hitting users' inboxes.

Many users within the district were already familiar with Google Apps and stepped in to help their fellow educators learn the ropes. This unsolicited peer support, combined with the intuitive, full-featured Google Apps web interface, led to a nearly seamless deployment. In addition, the IT team quickly noticed a drastic decrease in help tickets for email related issues.

After switching to Google Apps, Graden calculates total savings of about \$400,000 for the first year, including savings from non-renewal of the prior system and reduced email maintenance, hardware upgrades, and ongoing IT support. These savings have allowed the district to keep valued programs and student services that otherwise would have been cut. Encouraged by the success with faculty and staff, the Saline IT team will soon roll out Google Apps to the district's 3,200 students in grades 5-12.

An unexpected benefit for faculty and staff has been the widespread use of forms within Google Docs. Teachers use forms to



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create administrative agendas that can be projected during meetings and then saved as a single, always-current rolling document for meeting notes. With Google Sites, they've all established a web presence. And with Google Video, Saline district schools now share a morning announcement video that's posted to its private domain.

"Google Apps has worked out better than I could have ever imagined," Graden concludes. "We expected a more reliable, stable and virus-free email. But we got more – a suite of integrated collaborative applications that is being used by teachers and in our classrooms. Everywhere I look, everybody is using it and talking about it. Google Apps is taking off like wildfire."

For more information about Google Apps Education Edition, please visit google.com/apps/school.

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