



CASE STUDY: Pasadena Independent School District, TX

Pasadena ISD knew that SIF was the strategy to move forward with. The school district was selecting vendors who had software applications that had made an investment in SIF and understood what it was.

Overview of the Problem

The Pasadena Independent School District uses the data it collects to positively impact instruction and student achievement. The district depended on a mainframe system developed in-house but the administration was interested in transitioning to a more modern system. The staff agreed that no single system could fulfill all the needs of teachers, staff and administrators. Based upon this conclusion, the district decided to deploy numerous best-of-breed software applications from multiple vendors, each of which met or exceeded district requirements. To accomplish this, they needed a solution that would provide seamless data flow between the different applications.

Bob Daugherty, Executive Director of Technology Services, and his staff knew that SIF be utilized as an integration strategy; however, Pasadena had no clear understanding of how a district-wide SIF solution could be implemented. As it became increasingly difficult to manage the data and integration between the software applications, Mr. Daugherty concluded that something had to change--sooner rather than later.

Demographic Information of the Implementation

The Pasadena ISD is located just south of Houston, Texas. The district encompasses:

- 89 square miles
- 61 campuses
- 52,000 students
- Student Population: 77.2% Hispanic, 11% White, 7.4% African American, 7.4% Asian
- 76% economically disadvantaged

Technical Solution and Applications

From the beginning, Pasadena ISD knew that they had found a viable strategy in leveraging the SIF standard, so they were already choosing vendors and software applications that were SIF Certified. They issued an RFP and selected Mizuni as a partner to begin their SIF Implementation in July 2007. Taking a phased approach, Pasadena ISD started by selecting the Mizuni Zone Integration Server (ZIS), Mizuni SIF Certified Agents for Pearson Chancery SMS and Hayes Software Systems TIPWeb, and Mizuni's SIF Certified Data Warehouse and Data Dashboard solution. Mizuni installed the ZIS and set up the SIF Zone to connect all these applications. Installation of the ZIS and the Chancery SMS agent required only one week and Pasadena's SIF solution has experienced no downtime since the ZIS went live in July 2007. The entire project implementation timeline spanned less than two weeks and was completed under budget.

The next phase involved installing the SIF-based data warehouse, which was critical to Pasadena's needs. With the SIF Framework already in place, this application was made functional and released to users for data analysis and reporting in less than 6 weeks.

Subsequently, Pasadena added other applications as their SIF Agents became available; including HealthMaster HealthOffice and Spectrum K12 Encore. Mizuni was assigned responsibility for ensuring the continued success of the implementation and all future maintenance. Currently, all 61 campuses have been integrated into the SIF Implementation. Each application is run from a central database and each application is based at the district level with no campus-based applications.

Our district analyzes student trends data to drive instruction and meet student individual needs. We would not be where we are today without SIF and getting this information to all administrators and teachers.

-Bob Daughrity

Executive Director

Technology Services

Benefits Achieved and Results

Pasadena ISD is truly an information driven decision making district. Accurate, timely and relevant educational data is central to all district decisions; including those that directly impact student instruction. With a SIF-based best-of-breed solution in place, Pasadena enjoys data integrity across all applications, integration stability, faster access to the data needed for decisions and greater expandability in the future by deploying additional SIF Certified products. In summary, SIF has provided Pasadena ISD with:

- Greatly increased application interoperability,
- Lower total cost of ownership,
- Near real-time data delivery,
- Significant time savings in application integration and maintenance, and
- Staged and controllable migration to add new functionality, as SIF Certified application upgrades do not break existing interfaces.

Data reliability and consistency have improved as well. With SIF, data is exchanged in a stable environment. The SIF Specification guarantees secure delivery, and whenever any data is updated, every application using that data is notified of the change.

Pasadena ISD has also achieved savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars in the selection of a SIF-based data warehouse and applications for their SIF Implementation, and in the subsequent time and manpower expenditures required to support their datacenter. For example, the technology services staff no longer needs to develop special export files and keep them up-to-date, or spend time explaining detailed table layouts and data formats to vendors of newly selected products, as all of these technical hurdles are alleviated with SIF Certified applications.

Lessons Learned

One of the biggest lessons learned for Pasadena ISD applies to writing RFPs. When writing RFPs, be certain to word phrases carefully. Be specific in terms of SIF and your needs. Some of the staff's decisions would have been different in the evaluation process if things in the RFP had been made clearer.

Another lesson learned highlights the importance of finding the right integration partner. Pasadena's technology services staff was initially concerned at the complexity of SIF, particularly as they held no existing in-house expertise on the subject. However once they selected the right partner, the SIF Implementation proved easy to accomplish.

Finally, it is worth the effort to search for a proven SIF Certified ZIS and ask potential vendors for references. If the selected vendor can clearly explain how their SIF ZIS works and what it will take to create a working SIF Zone for the given set of SIF Certified applications, your district will reduce both the time and the cost of implementing your SIF solution.

Next Steps

Pasadena ISD employs additional software applications that are not currently a part of their SIF Implementation. District staff is working with those applications' vendors to develop SIF Agents. In addition, the Transfinder transportation management system is currently in testing and there is a plan to deploy the SIF Certified Mizuni Identity Manager SIF Agent for Microsoft Active Directory to automate identity management in the summer of 2009.

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>.



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