



Customer: Mendon-Upton Regional School District

Website: www.mursd.org

Customer Size: 400 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Education–K-12

Customer Profile

The Mendon-Upton Regional School District, located southwest of Boston, Massachusetts, serves 3,000 students. The district comprises two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

Software and Services

- Services
 - Microsoft Live@edu
 - Microsoft Office Live
 - Microsoft Office Live Workspace
 - Microsoft Office Outlook Live
 - Windows Live SkyDrive

For more information about other Microsoft customer successes, please visit: www.microsoft.com/casestudies

School District Implements Hosted Email, Saves \$20,000 Up Front, \$10,000 Annually

“With the savings enabled by our move to Live@edu, we are able to preserve other IT initiatives that had been considered for cancellation...”

Joe Leacu, Director of Technology, Mendon-Upton Regional School District

To address challenges of reduced budgets and an aging onsite email infrastructure, the Mendon-Upton Regional School District implemented Microsoft Live@edu, a free*, hosted communication and collaboration service. As a result, the district is cutting IT costs by U.S.\$20,000 the first year and a projected \$10,000 every year thereafter. It also is improving email reliability and providing teachers a more convenient and collaborative work environment.

Business Needs

The Mendon-Upton Regional School District was established in 1960 and is headquartered in Mendon, Massachusetts, about 40 miles southwest of Boston. In the 2010–2011 academic year, the district educated 3,000 students in its two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

Like many of its counterparts, the district has faced declining federal and state funding, and in 2010 it was forced to cut 5 to 10 percent of its budget over the ensuing three school years. For Joe Leacu, Director of Technology at Mendon-Upton Regional School District, the reductions struck especially hard, because many of the district’s IT activities are classified as

discretionary. But the reductions also served as an opportunity for Leacu and his colleagues to transform the district’s approach to email—one of his department’s most important services and, at the time, a source of ongoing challenges. “The district relied for many years on an onsite email infrastructure—based most recently on the Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 messaging and collaboration software—whose age was beginning to show,” Leacu explains. “As a result, we spent two or three hours each week addressing hardware problems.”

Another problem was that teachers could not easily access email over their smartphones. “Considering the growing number of mobile devices, the department didn’t have the resources to help everyone

with setup and access issues," Leacu says.

Solution

Leacu assembled a six-person team to review the options for replacing the onsite email infrastructure with a cloud-based solution. After considering both Google Apps for Education and Microsoft Live@edu, the free* online communication and collaboration service that is hosted on Microsoft Exchange 2010 servers, Leacu and his team chose the Microsoft solution. "Having relied on Microsoft products for many years, we were more comfortable with staying in that environment than moving to an open-source platform," Leacu says.

Leacu's team implemented a package of Live@edu services that includes Microsoft Outlook Live for hosted email; Microsoft Office Web Apps for productivity services using the online companions to Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote; and Windows Live SkyDrive for online storage. To introduce the new services, team members provided question-and-answer sessions during regularly scheduled faculty meetings at each of the district's four schools. To set up new users and help them make the most of Live@edu, the team:

- Created user accounts, passwords, and Outlook Personal Storage (PST) files, which enable users to save older email messages.
- Publicized the ActiveSync feature supported by Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 in the cloud so that teachers and staff could configure their smartphones to access email messages through Outlook Live.
- Encouraged users to take advantage of Office Web Apps for document creation and SkyDrive for storage in the cloud.

According to Leacu, implementation proceeded smoothly, especially as

compared with a similar project that involved migrating a student-information system to the cloud. "During the earlier transition, there were multiple concerns regarding usability and procedure," he says. "But this time, not at all."

Benefits

With the move to Live@edu, Mendon-Upton Regional School District is enjoying more reliable email communications, saving significant costs, and giving teachers and staff a work environment that is more convenient and collaborative.

Enhanced Reliability

Since the beginning, Leacu and his colleagues have noticed reliability improvements from having replaced the district's onsite email infrastructure with Outlook Live. "We no longer have problems with aging mail-server hardware, so we can apply the time that we used to spend on those problems to preventative maintenance—helping ensure our IT operation runs at its best for supporting academic objectives," he says.

Impressive Cost Savings

The district also is enjoying dramatic savings on email: U.S.\$20,000 in the first year following implementation and \$10,000 every year after that. Yearly savings come from avoiding the licensing costs of email antivirus and antispam software, and the bonus savings in the first year come from avoiding a server hardware replacement.

"With the savings enabled by our move to Live@edu, we are able to preserve other IT initiatives that had been considered for cancellation—such as a web-based video archive that is popular with teachers and students alike," says Leacu.

Convenient Access

Even while eliminating the problems and the costs of onsite email, the district is raising the quality of email service and offering greater convenience. For example, teachers and staff find it far easier to access email from their smartphones, because with the support in Live@edu for Outlook Web Access, smartphone setup and access can be handled by users themselves, without the need for IT assistance. "With smartphone access to their work email, teachers can conduct more timely communications not only with colleagues but also with parents," Leacu says. "This is handy for addressing parental questions that might arise outside of regular school hours."

Greater Collaboration

With Office Web Apps and SkyDrive enabling document creation and storage to move to the cloud, teachers and staff enjoy not only more convenience but also more collaboration. "Teachers are working on lesson plans and class presentations from home or elsewhere, without having to remember to back up files to a portable drive and carry it around with them," Leacu points out. "Teachers also are using the cloud for sharing photo- and video-based materials and eventually will use it for collaborating on a common curriculum."

Once this happens, the district will benefit not only academically, from having a more collaborative environment for teaching, but also financially. Leacu estimates that as teachers and staff make increasing use of cloud-based storage, the district will save several thousands of dollars yearly in onsite storage costs.

*Access to and use of the Internet may require payment of a separate fee to an Internet service provider. Local and/or long-distance telephone charges may apply.