



**Customer:** Twin Valley School District

**Web Site:** [www.tvsd.org](http://www.tvsd.org)

**Customer Size:** 322

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Education

**Customer Profile**

The Twin Valley School District covers an 89-square-mile area in eastern Pennsylvania with a population of 19,775.

**Software and Services**

- Services
  - Microsoft Live@edu
  - Microsoft Exchange Hosted Services
  - Microsoft Outlook Live
  - Microsoft Office Live Workspace 2007
  - Windows Live Messenger
  - Windows Live SkyDrive

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## School District Supports Group Projects and Creative Teaching with Hosted Services

*“Teachers are saying they want to run their entire curriculum on the shared workspaces available through Microsoft Live@edu. So we plan to have that capability ready for them on the first day of school this fall.”*

*Ken Gibson, IT Director, Twin Valley School District*

The Twin Valley School District wanted to resolve file storage and access challenges at its high school, help teachers manage documents, and provide email for faculty and students. Since implementing Microsoft Live@edu hosted communication and collaboration services, the district is better supporting group learning, helping teachers to be more creative in the classroom, and encouraging seniors to remain more engaged.

### Business Needs

Situated in the rolling hills of eastern Pennsylvania, the Twin Valley School District serves nearly 3,500 students at a high school, a middle school, and three elementary schools. At Twin Valley High School, information technology has long played a role in the curriculum, and in recent years, another trend has taken hold as well: an increasing focus on group assignments, especially for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students.

Until recently, however, the school's information technology did not fully meet the needs of students working on group projects, as Ken Gibson, IT Director at Twin Valley School District, explains. “One student might produce a document on his

or her home PC, other students would update the document on a school PC, and one of them would keep the updated document on a flash drive,” he says. “It was hard to keep track of who had the most recent copy of a group-based project.”

Teachers, too, needed a better way of storing and accessing teaching materials. The solution they used was common, although inefficient: sending documents to themselves through the school's Microsoft Exchange-based email system. “Many teachers were storing about a quarter of all their documents in their inboxes, a waste of IT resources,” Gibson says. “An even greater waste of IT resources was the two hours we spent each week helping them update and organize these folders.”

Another information-technology challenge at Twin Valley High School was the lack of a district-approved email system specifically for teachers and students. "Because the existing system was designed exclusively for faculty and staff, teachers could not use it for assignments, supporting group projects, or pursuing other practices that might enhance or simplify interactions with students," Gibson explains.

## Solution

Gibson and his colleagues considered upgrading the district's license agreement for Exchange to provide student accounts on the email system. But because of the district's limited IT resources, Gibson's team favored the simplicity of a hosted solution. So they evaluated both Google Apps for Education and Microsoft Live@edu hosted communication and collaboration services.

"We looked at Google Apps for Education because it was being promoted through a project at the state level," Gibson says. "But because of our familiarity with Microsoft applications, and after consulting with members of the school board, parents, and the public, we determined that Live@edu was the direction we wanted to go."

To introduce the Live@edu initiative at Twin Valley High School, administrators presented the new solution to faculty as an option, according to Kate Long, Principal at Twin Valley High School. "We knew we didn't have to push hard because once the service was deployed it would sell itself," she says.

The district deployed Live@edu accounts first to teachers and then to eleventh- and twelfth-grade students at the high school. Within a few months, all 87 faculty members and more than 800 students were using

Live@edu for email with Microsoft Outlook Live and other services, including file storage and sharing with Microsoft Office Live Workspace and Windows Live SkyDrive, and instant messaging with Windows Live Messenger.

The district also will deploy Live@edu to its middle school in fall 2010 and will implement Microsoft Office 2010 Web Applications at a future date.

## Benefits

For Gibson, Long, and their colleagues, bringing Live@edu to Twin Valley High School is helping the school resolve its challenges with file access and storage. The hosted solution also is supporting creative approaches to teaching and learning, and is helping motivate seniors to remain more engaged with school throughout their final year.

### Supporting Group Projects and File Management

With the shared workspaces available through the Live@edu hosted solution, Twin Valley High School students are managing shared documents far more efficiently than before. "Students can collaborate on group projects more easily now that they no longer have to depend on someone to maintain documents on a flash drive," Long says. "This helps teachers and students alike to take advantage of this valuable approach to learning."

Teachers, too, have a personalized workspace for file storage and access. "Teachers are no longer having to use their Exchange folders for file storage and access," Gibson says. "This helps the school use IT resources more efficiently and helps teachers keep better track of documents."

### Optimizing the Classroom Experience

Twin Valley High School teachers are taking advantage of Live@edu to enrich the classroom experience, as well. For example, in one early-morning senior English class, a teacher used chat rooms enabled by Windows Live Messenger to combine online and in-class learning exercises, and students were able to participate from home if they so chose.

One of those students, Kyle Shaw, says Live@edu provided an excellent environment for learning. "Discussions in the chat rooms were lively because we were using tools we were comfortable with," he says. "Later, the teacher printed and distributed the entire chat, which reinforced the ideas we discussed."

### Keeping Students Engaged

For Long, another advantage of Live@edu is that it helps seniors remain engaged with the school, even as they approach graduation. "Instead of putting all their focus on what happens beyond graduation, seniors this year seemed to hang in there longer," she says. "This may be partly because they were so engaged with Live@edu and wanted to help teachers devise inventive ways to use it."

Thanks to the warm reception of the rollout of Live@edu to eleventh- and twelfth-grade faculty and students, the Twin Valley School District will be setting up workspaces and accounts for faculty and students throughout the high school. "Teachers are saying they want to run their entire curriculum on the shared workspaces available through Microsoft Live@edu," Gibson says. "So we plan to have that capability ready for them on the first day of school this fall."