Issue Brief

Improving Information Efficiency Districtwide

How K–12 administrators can make the case for enterprise content management

Documents Everywhere = Efficiency Nowhere

Educating a child takes a lot of paperwork, yet much of it is generated — and must be managed and stored — outside of the classroom. In any K-12 school or district, you'll find a large and growing volume of paper documents and files related to all educational, administrative and operational functions.

The challenge of managing all of this paper-based information? There are documents everywhere, but it's increasingly difficult to access, control and share them. Compounding this challenge are other content management issues for K-12 districts:

- Lengthy retention periods mean districts must spend precious funds on file cabinets and the space to house them, as well as valuable staff time to file, retrieve, copy and distribute paper documents.
- Stringent compliance and certification mandates mean regular monitoring and action to ensure files, forms, reports and related materials are in place and up to date.
- A growing collection of videos and images mean greater storage requirements as these forms of content become more important for communication and recordkeeping.
- Declining administrative budgets mean districts must find ways to work smarter in all administrative and operational processes.

Some districts have tried to address these challenges by implementing ad hoc, standalone applications for content management, but with limited success. A better solution can be found in a single enterprise content management (ECM) system that is implemented districtwide to manage all forms of information.

Streamlining Paper and Work with an Enterprise View

An ECM solution is a single system that stores documents and other content electronically. It manages the complete lifecycle of a document or file from creation or capture in a school or administrative office to active routing, processing and access by authorized users to scheduled archiving and deletion according to the district's records management policies.

Why is a districtwide ECM system so important? Continuing to process and store paper or microfiche is no longer affordable or practical. Implementing specialized applications solves only small parts of the content management challenge. These outdated approaches also increase the maintenance burden on IT as well as the work and training demands for users.

In contrast, an integrated ECM system offers benefits that improve information access and control as well as work efficiency across all levels and functions in a K-12 district.

Manages multiple content types. An ECM system can manage data from online forms or scanned paper documents as well as uploaded images and media files or reports generated by applications.

Centralized document storage. Online storage of documents, forms and files enables easier access by all users who need them and reduces the risk of losing critical information to disaster or carelessness.

Automated document processing and workflows. Paperwork reviews and routine tasks can be made simpler, faster and more secure when ECM workflows automate document routing and notifications.

Integration with other systems. An ECM system can integrate a central document repository with existing systems for student information (SIS), enterprise resource planning (ERP), asset management and human resources.

Improved information security. Role-based privileges control which users can access sensitive or restricted documents and files.

Simpler maintenance and support. For IT, a single ECM system that is used across the district eliminates the extra maintenance and support burden that comes with disparate solutions that are implemented at the school or department level.

Better audit preparation. Files and documents that must be provided for audit review are more easily found in an online system with a central repository and searchable tags.

Going Beyond Document Storage to Workflow Automation

Enterprise content management isn't only about transferring documents from paper to digitized form and storing them on district servers. It's also about automating how a document is handled to make processing tasks easier, faster, more accurate and more secure.

An ECM system can automate common tasks across the district's operations, such as:

- Verifying that student records are complete and up to date when a student enrolls, transfers or graduates.

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- Sending automatic reminders when teacher certifications and employee background checks are due for renewal, then monitoring submitted forms and materials until the renewal is complete.
- Processing the forms related to hiring a new teacher. The payback on time and effort for this process alone can be particularly significant for districts that rehire all teachers each year.

Less Paper = Better Focus

As in any big enterprise, paperwork has been accepted as a necessary burden in the operations of K-12 schools and districts. By adopting a content management system at the enterprise level — where it can have the most impact — school districts can alleviate that burden and focus more on delivering efficient operations and quality education.

ECM Use Cases for K-12 Districts

K-12 administrators can justify an ECM investment by looking at how it will enhance all information and work functions, in both schools and district departments.

Purchasing, contracting and accounting. A district's financial operations involve perhaps the largest volume of paper documents and the most complexity for processing them. An ECM system manages and automates approvals for invoices and expense reports, issuance and tracking of purchase orders, and routing documents related to contract award and fulfillment.

Student information systems. Although records for current and past students may be kept in an SIS, enrolling new and transfer students means new documents to collect. An ECM system can maintain a single, secure copy of student identity documents, transcripts from previous schools and immunization records.

Human resources. Many personnel actions within a K-12 district must be repeated on a regular schedule, making them ideal candidates for automation. For example, an ECM system workflow can verify completeness of documents for teacher evaluations, certifications and continuing education courses.

Information security. It's hard to prevent unauthorized access to paper documents, but easy to protect electronic documents in an ECM system. With controls over individual user access, administrators can secure confidential student and personnel documents and improve compliance with privacy regulations such as HIPAA and FERPA. Electronic records also eliminate the risk of lost paper records due to disasters, damage, misfiling or tampering.

Facilities and asset management. An ECM system can store architectural drawings, installation schematics, equipment manuals, photos, even scans of handwritten notes. Maintenance staff have the essential resources at hand when they are working at a district facility and office-based staff can electronically track maintenance records, equipment inventories and work assignments.

Safety and emergency response. Web access to an ECM system portal allows on-campus and community first responders to see school floor plans and video files from security cameras.

Mobile work. Mobility support is helping many districts improve operations in the face of reduced staff and declining administrative budgets. An ECM system gives principals and other employees mobile access to the information and processes they need to work efficiently and responsively.

School board and committee meetings. An ECM system makes it easier to collect, distribute and maintain agendas, minutes, discussion packets, public comments and other meeting records for members and other parties.

One of the world's largest independent ECM software vendors, Hyland Software is the developer of OnBase. An award-winning suite of document and process management solutions, OnBase has a proven record of solving problems resulting from time consuming, costly and error plagued manual tasks. Available on-premises or as software as a service (SaaS), OnBase installs quickly, cost effectively and is designed to grow with organizations. Today, people at more than 11,000 organizations in 67 countries have the time to do the things that really add value thanks to OnBase. For these and other successes in its 22 year history, Hyland Software is a Leader in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Content Management, 2012.

For more information, visit www.hyland.com and www.hyland.com/government.