

Regional Technology Support Services

Hampshire and Chesterfield-Goshen Regional School Districts together with the municipal schools of Southampton, Westhampton, and Williamsburg in partnership with the towns of Chesterfield, Goshen, Southampton, Westhampton and Williamsburg

April 1, 2013



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HAMPSHIRE AND CHESTERFIELD-GOSHEN
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AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF
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INTRODUCTORY LETTER

April 1, 2013

Dear Interested Parties,

It is a pleasure and honor to share with you the final comprehensive report of our Community Innovation Challenge Grant: “Regional Technology Support Services.”

Our project, with the support of CIC funding, allowed the Public Schools of Williamsburg, Southampton, Westhampton (School Union 66) and the Hampshire and Chesterfield Regional School Districts to improve the efficiencies of their technological applications for human resources, accounting and finance, communication, and educational support. The project supported resource sharing and opportunities to build a unified capacity for using technological applications by improving efficiencies. We previously shared our work at the “Fourth Annual Regionalization Toolkit Conference” and at the “Leading Learning: The Future 2013” MASSCUE Conference on March 5, 2013.

The activities included in the project included efforts to: (1)Regionalization of data sharing through the implementation of Standard Interoperability Framework (SIF) among the five school districts for improved electronic information (2)migration from a fee based email service provider to free educational email and collaboration services such as Google Apps for Education (3) Plan for Massachusetts Broadband Initiative (MBI) implementation so that districts are regionally prepared for immediate connection upon completion of the fiber connection (4) Improving regionalized transportation system for more efficient bus routes by g services (5) Research and develop a regionalized cost sharing, resource share model for serving technology systems within our five school districts. Currently, we have different personnel in various districts addressing various segments of technology within our schools. Cross districts, we need a plan to service the administrative, academic, professional development, and operations of technology across our districts in a cost effective equitable system. Explore regionalized professional development, remote trouble shooting and network management.

In the end, our project successfully:

1. Purchased and installed software to improve electronic data sharing;
2. Establishing updated dynamic websites linked to our towns and communities;
3. Assisting towns and schools prepare for MBI;
4. Moved from a fee based email service to Google Apps for Education; and

5. Moved significantly toward improving the efficiency with which school transportation services are provided to student in five rural communities, including two regional school districts.

We continue to work on the increasing the cost savings to be realized in the increased efficiencies, coordination, and elimination of redundancies.

Sincerely,

Craig Jurgensen
Superintendent

Cynthia Landers
School Business Administrator

Kimberly Florek
Technology Coordinator

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overarching goal of the Hampshire Regional CIC project focused on the reduction of duplication of efforts, gains in efficiencies, and cost effective solutions in the School District, as well as in the towns served by the District. The components of the initiative are:

1. Data sharing – reduction of duplication of data entry together with an increase of data accuracy for better reporting and decision making;
2. Unified Web Sites – reduction of duplication of efforts and a gain in community communication and outreach;
3. Transportation – create cost effective bus routes and more clearly defined procedures for both town and regional transportation;
4. Google Apps for Education – migrate to free email and effective use of collaboration tools;
5. Massachusetts Broadband Initiative Planning – prepare for sharing resources over high speed fiber connections; and
6. Project Coordination – engage consulting services to help establish a sustainable organizational model.

PARTNER COMMUNITIES

The Hampshire Regional School District is located in Westhampton and serves students in grades 7-12 from the towns of Chesterfield, Goshen, Southampton, Westhampton, and Williamsburg. The Towns of Chesterfield and Goshen maintain a regional K-6 school district, and the Towns of Williamsburg, Westhampton, and Southampton all have their own k-6 school districts. Each of the four elementary districts and the regional secondary district have their own school committees and are legally separate districts. The districts have a history of collaboration and share a central office that includes a business manager and superintendent. The central office continues to evaluate how the five districts can share resources, and this project is an example of a collaborative effort to provide standardized technological services across the districts. The project facilitated a positive shift in communication and collaboration by refocusing the relationship between the District and the municipal governments. Whereas local funding and budgeting were generally the single most often addressed topic, the CIC grant forged a new partnership aligned to problem solving and information sharing designed to improve services within and across municipal departments.

GOALS

1. Reduce duplication of effort as evidenced by improved timeliness of required report submission;
2. Consolidated service contracts;
3. Decrease data errors and the need for subsequent need for correction;
4. Consistent and effective use of free email (evaluation of cost savings);
5. Coordinated professional development training across five schools;
6. Survey users (parents, municipal officials, school staff) of effectiveness and efficiency of website information ;
7. Improve bus route efficiencies as measured by: costs, number of routes, review of parent concerns/complaints;
8. Review of “help desk” supports and problem resolution. Survey of users and review of support provided; and
9. Completion of a satisfaction survey of town administrators and board members focused on improvements and future expansion to municipal functions.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. Purchase and installation of SIF (standard interoperability framework) agents to improve electronic data sharing.
2. Migration to free educational email and collaboration services such as Google Apps for Education to provide regionalized email, professional development and planning.
3. Complete individual surveys of school personnel and community stakeholders to ascertain their perceptions and recommendations regarding the use of technology.
4. Standardization of collaborative platform such as Google Apps to provide standardized professional development across the district and a platform for coordinating projects across the districts.
5. Development of professional development delivery models throughout the five districts in a cost-effective manner.
6. Provide an up-to-date regionalized consistent website to provide information regarding the activities and operations of the schools to the community stakeholders.
7. Improve bus route efficiencies for the 2013-2014 school year using information from a transportation audit completed in October 2011 with a follow-up in December 2012 by members of the Massachusetts School Business Officials (MASBO) professional organization.

BUDGET

Item/Service	Total Cost
Staff Stipends	\$10,000
SIF Agents	\$35,000
Feasibility Plan for regionalized staff	\$5,000
MBI Planning	\$10,000
Hardware	\$5,000
Transportation Study/Review	\$8,000
Website application and tools	<u>\$5,000</u>
Total CIC Budget	\$78,000

Notes

1. Funds were requested consistent with the need of the School Department to facilitate improve coordination, communication, and partnerships with municipal governments, as well as to ensure maximum access to local needs such as website improvement and MBI connection. The unifying theme throughout the project centered on improved collaboration, communication, and data sharing by improving the overarching relationship between the five municipal governments, the three municipal schools, and the two regional school districts.
2. All staff working on the project were paid with local funds.
3. Additional funding was provided by a DESE Grant using Fund Code 115 in the amount of \$32,459. The DESE funds complemented those provided through the CIC grant. Fund use was focused on SIF agent installation and training since the enhanced electronic data sharing was targeted to improve data transmission & submission to DESE.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The challenges of implementing the CIC project can efficiently summarized. The challenges facing our District as we undertook this project, however, were more complex. The challenges of the project included:

1. Talking to the “right” people;
2. Building effective implementation teams;
3. Underestimating the amount of effort to ensure buy-in;
4. Developing a well thought out communication plan; and
5. Identifying a project manager to stay within scope

As a District, we were challenged by the significant work required to achieve the innovations and system efficiencies by staffing that was thinly stretched with multiple administrative, teaching or support responsibilities. To achieve meaningful, coordinated outcomes the District required an infusion of support and focused attention on the goals and activities of this project to eliminate the multiple support requirements that resulted in a lack of system coordination and articulation.

The five districts comprise 130.1 square miles. Population density ranges from 191 people per square mile in Southampton to 38 people per square mile in Chesterfield. Remote trouble-shooting and regionalized professional development delivered over the internet through “Help Desk” software and applications such as Google Apps were viewed as a way to reduce travel time between buildings and provide timely, equitable, cost-effective service.

The towns composing the five districts Chesterfield, Goshen, Southampton, Westhampton, and Williamsburg consistently resisted proposals to regionalize into one Pre-K to Grade 12 region. The five districts, Hampshire Regional School District, Chesterfield-Goshen Regional School District, and the Public School Districts of Union 66, Southampton, Westhampton, and Williamsburg thus endeavored to create regional collaboration without the formal structure of one regional school district.

The solutions we sought included a reduction in duplication of efforts, including: data entry, firewalls, content filtering, file storage, management of multiple devices, service contracts, extended warranties, and telephone PBX systems. More specifically:

8. Reduction in data entry and on-going maintenance of data between Central Office and Town offices and individual schools in Southampton, Williamsburg and Westhampton by coordinating electronic transfer of payroll and accounting data between schools, central office, and Town Offices.
9. Migration to free educational email and collaboration services such as Google Apps for Education to provide regionalized email, professional development and planning.

10. Standardization of collaborative platform such as Google Apps to provide standardized professional development across the district and a platform for coordinating projects across the districts.
11. Development of professional development delivery models throughout the five districts in a cost-effective manner.
12. Provide an up-to-date regionalized consistent website to provide information regarding the activities and operations of the schools to the community stakeholders.
13. Bus route efficiencies will be gained using information from a transportation audit completed in October 2011 by members of the Massachusetts School Business Officials (MASBO) professional organization. These efficiencies would support the districts as they proceed with bid specifications and the solicitation of bids for continuing transportation services. Currently, the bus routing is determined and controlled by the bus contractor with school department consent. The school department would take over more of the control over the routes with advice from the bus contractor. This relates to future contracting for busing services.

OUTCOMES

1. SIF agents purchased and installed. Electronic data sharing is improved with continuing refinement of implementation
2. Implemented migration to Google Apps free educational email and collaboration services.
3. Consolidation of District initiative focus. School administrators agreed that technology should act as a “servant” in support of (1) Educating all students, (2) Implementing educator growth and evaluation procedures, and (3) reaffirming a commitment to sustained and coordinated professional development.
4. A redesigned website with consistent navigation tools and themes.
5. Ongoing improvement in bus route efficiencies. This is a work in progress.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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RESOURCES

Pearson Data Solutions for our SIF implementation Cumulus Global for our Google APP for Education migration Edline for our web site implementation

Future Management Systems, Inc
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978-998-6782

Hampshire Regional School District