

EARNING HIGH MARKS THROUGH INTEGRATION

Challenge

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is required to comply with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (“No Child Left Behind”), the most significant education policy initiative in decades. The goals of this act include high proficiency standards, highly qualified teachers, and a 100% graduation rate. FCPS’ Department of Information Technology needed application integration to fulfill these requirements.

Solution

Thanks to the capabilities of webmethods’ integration suite, FCPS achieved comprehensive system integration, including built-in support for business process management and workflow.

Benefits

System integration has led towards greater automation of Fairfax County Public Schools’ business processes and compliance with “No Child Left Behind” requirements.



Fairfax County Public Schools, located in Fairfax County, Virginia, is the 13th largest school district in the United States, with over 164,000 students attending classes in 238 schools, and a \$2.1 billion annual operating budget. It is a diverse and dynamic school system, and parents have come to expect and demand a lot from FCPS. FCPS has relied heavily on its information technology systems over the years to ensure facilities and classes run smoothly.

Get there faster.™

“The application itself was simple, but what it accomplished for us was significant. We now have the confidence and knowledge we need to tackle the bigger problem.”

Ted Davis | Director of Knowledge Asset Management | Fairfax County Public Schools

Extensive and non-integrated IT infrastructure

FCPS has long recognized the importance of information technology systems in supporting its operations, and in many ways has been an innovator. Its technology infrastructure consists of more than 65,000 desktop workstations, supported by approximately 700 servers. More than 30 enterprise applications are used to run the school system’s operations, including such areas as human resources, payroll, financials, food services, transportation and library services.

Over the past 20 years, the system had linked most of its core enterprise applications to exchange critical data through customized integration projects. Those efforts served the school system well, but the point-to-point architecture became increasingly difficult to manage and acted as a roadblock to further linking systems. “The architecture had become a bit like a ball and chain around our neck,” says Ted Davis, Director of Knowledge Asset Management. “We wanted to be able to quickly respond to changing business needs and move forward, but the architecture was holding us back.”

Furthermore, the hardware running some of the legacy applications was becoming obsolete to the point where the vendor could no longer guarantee its continued operation. The school system decided to pursue a strategy of using commercial, off-the-shelf applications, which further complicated the process of integrating new applications into existing systems. FCPS clearly saw the need to adopt a more holistic approach to integration.

A standardized solution for multiple systems

FCPS began looking for an enterprise application partner in early 2000, starting with an initial list of 11 vendors. Following an extensive evaluation of product features, it narrowed the list to three finalists. As a result of its performance in the proof

of concept, the school system decided to standardize on the webMethods product suite and leverage the comprehensive capabilities of this business integration suite. It was clearly demonstrated that the integration platform could do the job, but that was only one factor in the decision. “We saw Software AG was heading in the same strategic direction that we wanted to go in. We see integration as a stepping stone to where we want to be — and that is greater automation of our business processes.”

The school system currently had some 700 different types of forms required for various processes, each requiring different levels of human interaction. A case in point is the forms required for class field trips. Forms are filled out by a teacher, delivered to a school principal, forwarded to the system’s transportation office for scheduling, then checked with the finance office to ensure funding is available. The highly manual process is repeated about 16,000 times every school year. “It’s a prime example of a process that could be automated, but to establish that kind of capability you need a solid integration solution with built-in support for business process management and workflow,” Davis says.

A Web-based application enables up-to-date information

The contract was awarded and the groundwork for a system-wide deployment was laid. Sun Microsystems was selected as the hardware provider, and Software AG’s professional services organization supported the implementation.

To gain experience in working with the integration solution and to establish procedures for future implementations, the technology team chose a relatively simple integration for its first project. A Web-based application was developed to tie together information from the SASI (Schools Administrative Student Information Software) application, which essentially manages student

data, with a human resources application from Lawson. The new application is a step towards enabling administrators to capture the most up-to-date information and compare students’ achievements with the professional qualification of teachers. The application is viewed as an important link in meeting the goals set out in the “No Child Left Behind” Act.

“The application itself was simple, but what it accomplished for us was significant,” says Davis. “We now have the confidence and knowledge we need to tackle the bigger problem.”

KEY COMPONENTS

webMethods Optimize For Infrastructure

This Business Activity Monitoring (BAM) tool allows for better visibility and control of the integration environment. It monitors a cluster of Integration Servers and single Broker and it used to collect and measure statistics from the Student Information System.

ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

Software AG is the world’s largest independent provider of Business Infrastructure Software. Our 4,000 global customers achieve measurable business results by modernizing and automating their IT systems and rapidly building new systems and processes to meet growing business demands.

Our industry-leading product portfolio includes best-in-class solutions for managing data, enabling service-oriented architecture, and improving business processes. By combining proven technology with industry expertise and best practices, our customers improve and differentiate their businesses – faster.

Software AG – Get There Faster

© 2008 Software AG. All rights reserved. Software AG and all Software AG products are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Software AG. Other product and company names mentioned herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.