

Case Study

Advanced Imaging Solutions helps Mishawaka School Corporation graduate to document management software

Challenges

- Compliance to State and Federal privacy and public records regulations
- Large volume of paper records
- Improvement of quality of service to students and families
- \$2 million budget shortfall in 2006

Mishawaka, Indiana, with a population of 46,500, is a medium-sized metropolitan area near South Bend, Indiana. Like many similar U.S. school districts, Mishawaka finds itself under continual budget pressures, much of it caused by diminishing State and Federal funding levels. At the same time, it is coping with the need to maintain and improve services to students and families in the Mishawaka district, including compliance with public records requirements imposed by those same State and Federal bodies. With nine schools, 1000 employees, and 5100 students, Mishawaka faced the reality in spring of 2006 of a \$2 million dollar budget shortfall, which has squeezed the staffing levels within the school system.

Any school system handles a lot of paper. Mishawaka is no exception. The system faced the challenge of an increasing volume of transcripts and administrative information to the extent that they were constantly adding file cabinets to store student transcripts and accounts payable data. In an environment where physical space was at a high premium, these paper records were taking up more and more physical space. Hard copies of transcripts were kept in a storage area approximately 1200 feet from the administrative offices. A typical information retrieval request would take a minimum of ten minutes to individually fulfill, that is if an administrator were immediately available. The school system's often-requested student transcripts date back to the early 1900's. Furthermore, all educational records are now subject to FERPA. FERPA provides privacy protections for student records when held by federally funded educational institutions. In addition, the Indiana access to Public Records Act requires school systems to make available to the public all documents of school committee meetings.

Solution

- Fortis™ document management software by Westbrook Technologies

After an analysis of the school corporation's workflow and records storage system, Advanced Imaging Solutions recommended Fortis™ by Westbrook Technologies. Fortis is powerful document management software that electronically captures, stores, and organizes documents and business information, thus enabling immediate and reliable access to critical information right when it's needed.

Results

- Information is easily accessible by authorized users but secure from unauthorized access
- Valuable school space has been freed for administrative and educational uses
- Retrieval time for information has been reduced from minutes to seconds
- Projected savings of close to \$10,000 in administrative costs in the first year

While in use for only six months, the Fortis system already holds 14,000 of the school system's documents and approximately 50 are being added on a daily basis.

Currently, records that are managed with Westbrook document management include transcripts, other student records, and accounts payable invoices and payment requests. Future types of "unstructured content" that is planned for addition to the system are board of education meeting minutes, forms and applications, HR records, and insurance-related materials.

There is a dedicated team of two staff members who have taken on the role of putting paper documents into the electronic system. They make use of Westbrook's Microsoft Office plug-in, which allows the storage of electronic files together with digitized paper records. The integration between Microsoft Office and Fortis is very easy and unique among document management software programs. Fortis is one of the few programs that provides this capability. The digitized records are

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— Larry Hanks
IT Administrator
Mishawaka Schools

now quick and easy to find when a request is made, as well as making it easy to print out or email a copy to fulfill a request.

The retrieval of student transcripts from public requests has seen the biggest impact so far. The record retrieval time has been cut from 10 minutes to a few seconds. Based on a conservative estimate of 1000 requests a year, that amounts to the saving of close to \$10,000 in administrative costs alone in one year. As soon as the complete body of records has been converted, the hard copies will eventually be moved to another less valuable storage area which is farther away, freeing school space for other administrative or educational uses. The freeing of that real estate is invaluable.

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