



Microsoft .NET Technology Customer Solution Case Study

Luther College deploys Microsoft Learning Gateway to simplify and improve the way teachers manage administration tasks

Overview

Country or region: Australia
Industry: Education

Customer Profile

Luther College in Melbourne is a co-educational school catering for 1000 students in Years 7 to 12.

Business Situation

Teaching staff at Luther College were spending an increasing amount of time generating paperwork for attendance management and reports.

Solution

Luther College deployed the Scholaris Learning Gateway to integrate school reporting, attendance, student records and resources with all of their administration databases across their wireless network.

Benefits

- Staff have access to exactly what they need, when they need it
- Staff can enter attendances directly from the classroom via the wireless network, eliminating double entry
- Improved communication across the school community

“For us, 21st Century learning is about using technology to help our teachers work smarter, not harder. We didn’t want them getting bogged down with paperwork, when they should be focusing on teaching, which is what they enjoy.”

Christopher Topp, Director of Information Technology, Luther College

Teachers and administration staff at Luther College used to be burdened with paperwork when it came to student attendance, reports and record-keeping. Then they deployed Scholaris Learning Gateway, a portal solution developed on the Microsoft Learning Gateway framework. Each staff member can now log on with one password to their individualized portal site, which features everything they need to do their job – email, applications, internet access, timetables, learning management system, student records and more. Staff can take attendance and record it using their wireless laptops in the classroom as they teach. Administration staff can see at a glance who is absent, and contact the parents via text message (SMS) within minutes. The solution is revolutionising the way they manage their workload and freeing teachers up to spend more time with students.

Situation

Established in 1964, Luther College in Melbourne is a co-educational school, which caters for 1000 students in Years 7 to 12. The school manages 750 laptops for students in Years 9 -12 as well as 350 desktops and 145 staff laptops. A wireless network provides anywhere anytime access to learning resources at the school. Previously, staff at Luther College maintained paper records which were subsequently keyed in to the student attendance records on the administration database. This was a labor-intensive task for both teachers and administrative staff, which reduced the time available to spend on other important activities. Consequently, the IT team began to look for ways to manage the technology at the school in order to minimize duplication of effort and give valuable time back to staff.

Christopher Topp, Director of IT at Luther College, comments: "We wanted to use technology to help our teachers work smarter, not harder. We didn't want them getting bogged down with paperwork when they should be focusing on teaching, which is what they enjoy."

Solution

After an in-depth investigation, which involved looking at the possibility of building their own proprietary system, Christopher Topp decided to deploy Scholaris Learning Gateway, a solution based on the Microsoft Learning Gateway that was developed by Microsoft partner Solutions IT.

Based on the Microsoft® .NET framework, Scholaris Learning Gateway uses Microsoft® Office, Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server and Microsoft® Windows Server™ technologies to integrate Luther College's applications, systems, information and resources with a range of smart tools and technologies.

Christopher Topp explains: "Scholaris Learning Gateway gathers up all the software programs, databases and systems we are

already using and presents them to staff in a single sign-on, individualized portal web site." Student information is integrated into the solution, so that from this one portal site Luther College staff can now view complete student profiles, including timetable, contact and emergency information, as well as semester and interim student reporting information. It's also easy to look up pastoral care and alerts, or check the students' status.

This information can be securely accessed by staff from their wireless laptops making it easy for them to mark attendance, as well as add updates or comments as they work. Their changes are reflected across the system so that others can instantly see them and there is no need to enter information twice.

From their individualized portal sites staff can also see public and personal timetables and calendars, enabling them to know at a glance which events are coming up, and if there is a clash.

They can also access all the applications they commonly use, send and receive emails, and browse the Internet. Everything they need to do their job successfully is now in one accessible place, making it far easier to get things done. As it is Web based, teachers can also access their individual portal site from home if they choose.

Staff will not be the only ones to benefit from the Scholaris Learning Gateway solution.

Access is going to be extended to students who will be able to log in using their student identity code (also generated by the system). They'll be able to see their own individualized learning portal, which will feature their timetable, interactive teaching materials, the applications they are allowed to use, suggested safe web sites, personal email, the school calendar and news. They will also be able to store an e-portfolio of their work as a record of their achievements.

Christopher Topp comments: "The Scholaris Learning Gateway solution has proved an invaluable tool, enabling teachers to manage their daily schedule more efficiently."

Extending this same capability to the students will only improve the management of their time, as well as help them meet deadlines for projects, assignments and exam revision.

They will be able to communicate with teachers via email, complete assignments online, and even develop an e-portfolio of their school work.”

Benefits

Improved staff effectiveness

By changing the way teachers approach the management of their work, staff have been able to be far more effective in their daily tasks. Christopher Topp comments: “We’ve been using Scholaris Learning Gateway for nine months, and we’ve noticed that it has made it far easier for staff to access exactly what they need, when they need it – and this has made them far more effective in their roles.

“If they need to check their calendar and see what’s happening today or next month it’s available; if they want to look up details about a student, they simply type in a name to view the information they need; if they want to use an application it’s right on hand; if they want to download a policy they can do it on the spot. “No more walking across school to find the right person or filling out paperwork and waiting for confirmation.

“Being better organized has also given them more time to be with the students, which is a huge benefit.”

Administration staff have also appreciated having immediate access to student information.

Christopher Topp says: “Due to the flexible nature of the underlying Microsoft SharePoint technology, we have experimented with running staff appraisal feedback from both staff and students.

“Being paperless, this has proved a very successful way of efficiently collating what can be vast amounts of information.

“As a result, we have plans to extend the use of this technology to include common

workflow processes, such as purchase orders, expense reimbursements, teaching staff absence, classroom notes and more.”

Improved attendance records

Luther College takes its duty of care in relation to accurate attendance reporting very seriously. Using Scholaris Learning Gateway the class roll is easily updated. This information is accessible by administration staff and any anomalies are highlighted for follow-up. If an absence is unexplained, an SMS is instantly sent to the student’s parents with a request for an explanation. This has meant that time-consuming follow-up phone calls are no longer needed, and unauthorized student absences are almost non-existent. Christopher Topp comments: “Attendance record keeping has improved ten-fold.

“If a student is absent at the start of a lesson, administration staff are alerted immediately, and can crosscheck against any parent communication or existing absence notes.

“If there are none, administration staff can immediately contact the parent via SMS and record this action in the attendance database.”

Improved communication between parents and teachers

The portal site has also made it easier for teachers to communicate with parents. Firstly, they are easily able to find the parents’ contact details if an interview is required, and secondly, they can also see at a glance the academic records of a student so that they can provide parents with an informed opinion with regard to progress.

In the longer term the school also plans to extend the portal option to parents, enabling them to see how their child is progressing by looking at academic results, assignments and attendance.

They’ll also be able to view school photos, due assignments, see school news and access alerts and notifications.

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, please call 13 20 58 (Australia). For more information about Microsoft's education solutions, please visit the Web site at www.microsoft.com.au/education/

For more information about Microsoft Learning Gateway, visit www.microsoft.com/australia/education/schools.mspx

For more information about Solutions IT products and services, visit the Web site at www.solutionsit.com/

Improved management

From an IT management perspective, Scholaris Learning Gateway has given Christopher Topp a robust and flexible architecture that's easy to deploy and manage. The solution can be scaled to add new applications or resources as Luther College's staff and student needs evolve. It also simplifies application deployment by centralizing Luther College's IT management and provisioning.

Christopher Topp says: "This is not one of those products that you need years of exposure and in-depth training to understand or manage. "Because it is based on common standards, such as Microsoft® Active Directory and Microsoft® SQL Server™, it really is easy to set up.

"A good example of this would be Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). Our users simply log in using their normal internet connection to the portal through their web browser to access network files and folders – exactly as if they were at the College.

"This feature alone has saved us hours in technical support time and vastly simplified out of hours access to critical information and network resources."

Online lessons

Now that staff are becoming familiar with the solution, they are gradually starting to use the included comprehensive learning management suite as well as classroom collaboration tools which enable them to

communicate targeted information to teachers, students or parents across the College community.

Christopher Topp says, "This is an exciting time for Luther College. The Scholaris Learning Gateway has the potential to redefine the way in which we go about our core business of teaching."

The Future of Learning Management

Based in Perth, Western Australia, Solutions IT is rapidly gaining a global reputation for the development and delivery of state of the art learning management systems built on the Microsoft Learning Gateway framework. Director of Software Development Cliff Lloyd believes the company has much to offer the K-12 education market.

"We have hundreds of schools in Australia and Canada now ready to implement the latest version of the Scholaris Learning Gateway - Scholaris 2007," says Lloyd. "Schools have seen how the product integrates their current services whilst at the same time providing a unique and efficient learning management system teachers will embrace.

"The company is also looking to the future of Scholaris 2007, with significant upgrades and added functionality due in early 2007. "Improvements include a reporting module and world first Early Learner portal which will deliver the system to younger users via a graphical interface."

Software and Services

- Microsoft Products
 - Microsoft® SQL Server 2005
 - Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007
 - Microsoft® Windows Server 2003
 - Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003
 - Microsoft® Windows XP Professional
 - Microsoft ISA 2006 Server

Partner Solutions

- Solutions IT
 - Scholaris Learning Gateway

© 2006 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. This case study is for informational purposes only. MICROSOFT MAKES NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, IN THIS SUMMARY. Microsoft, the Microsoft logo, the .NET logo, SharePoint, SQL Server, Windows and Windows Server are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. The names of actual companies and products mentioned herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.

10201-1206/Luther/MS

Microsoft®