

Seagull Software Helps Clackamas Education Service District Web-Enable Legacy Applications



Clackamas Education Service District provides services and programs to ten school districts in Clackamas County, Oregon. Clackamas ESD offers many services including special education, early childhood education, media and technology services, curriculum development and migrant education.

For many schools, the technology advancement of internal administrative systems has traditionally taken a back seat to investments in educational programs. As a result, schools are left to work with legacy applications that have difficult-to-navigate green screens, inefficient processes, no online access and little or no integration capabilities. With the emergence of the Web and mainstream use of Windows and browser interfaces, users' expectations and requirements have escalated—posing a significant challenge for most schools, which are under pressure to improve productivity yet reduce costs in this budget- and resource-strapped industry.

Challenge

Clackamas Education Service District (ESD), a regional services agency that provides programs and services to schools in Clackamas County, Oregon, wanted to enhance their iSeries-based Student Information System (SIS), which serves as the core for all day-to-day administrative activities. Their goal was to replace complicated, text-based screens with a graphical user interface (GUI) and minimize support by deploying a thin client. However, with a small team of programmers and a limited budget, redeveloping their legacy applications was not an option. To leverage the investment they had made in their system, Clackamas ESD began searching for a solution that would help them enhance and integrate their existing applications with new, more open, Web-compatible technologies. "We only have three programmers, so trying to completely rewrite the client/server environment would be an extremely long process. We just don't have the resources to put any development effort into this area," said Larry Carter, IS manager for Clackamas ESD.

Solution

After evaluating various options, Clackamas ESD selected Seagull Software's LegaSuite GUI® solution, a component of LegaSuite®, to GUI-ize, Web-enable and workflow re-engineer their Student Information System—all without altering their existing system in any way. LegaSuite GUI provides industry-leading developer tools and infrastructure software for Web-to-host and Windows-to-host access to iSeries applications. LegaSuite GUI delivers the capability to deploy iSeries applications to HTML, Java and Windows environments in a single work effort.

Using LegaSuite GUI, Clackamas ESD replaced their complex interface with a simplified graphical environment. Now, instead of entering keyboard commands to navigate through a labyrinth of green screens, users can use a mouse to rapidly point and click their way through the applications. Teachers in the classrooms access the system to update student information such as attendance and grades, while the school administrative offices use it for various tasks including finance management, reporting and maintaining student demographics information—all in a simple, easy-to-use interface.



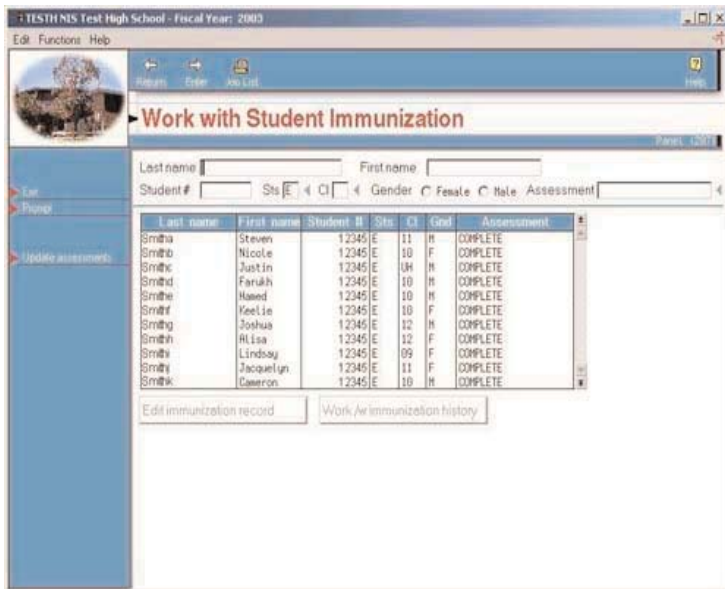
"LegaSuite GUI has met our expectations, and it's an easy tool to use. So far, we've had just one person developing the whole thing. The performance has been very good, and we have certainly had a very good customer service relationship."

— Jim Newton
Coordinator of Student
Systems
Clackamas Education
Service District

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LegaSuite GUI also allowed Clackamas ESD to incorporate student photos into the SIS applications, improving accuracy and efficiency. “Teachers and employees in the office are able to do all of the things now that they did with the text-based environment, but by adding the graphical interface they can work faster. Adding the photos really enhanced the system for our users. The reaction has been great. The teachers and office personnel really appreciate having more information at their fingertips,” said Jim Newton, coordinator of student systems for Clackamas ESD.



Teachers and school administration can update student records, all in an easy-to-use graphical interface.

LegaSuite GUI allowed Clackamas ESD not only to improve the look and feel of the screens, but also to consolidate and reorganize them to streamline workflows. “Now we can group functions together under tabs, notebooks, drop-down menus and push buttons. Users can just click on a button as opposed to hitting command keys and going through several screens to complete one action,” said Newton.

With LegaSuite GUI, Clackamas ESD also gained the ability to launch their SIS online in a secure network. Now users can quickly link from the SIS to external Websites, download student information and take advantage of FTP for transferring data files. “LegaSuite GUI has allowed us to leverage the existing system that we have to take advantage of Web technology, without having to spend a huge amount of money to acquire a new system,” said Carter. And putting the system on the Web has reduced the workload for system administrators. Through central administration, they can now update the system without touching every individual PC—a significant time savings, since there are hundreds of teachers and administrative employees in the districts that Clackamas ESD serves.

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Clackamas ESD selected LegaSuite GUI because it didn't require any additional servers, and it could deliver the functionality they needed in a thin client. "Schools typically don't have a large staff or budget to keep a fat client up-to-date. We were looking for something that could keep the support within schools at a minimum. And we wanted something that we could host on our iSeries. We didn't want any intermediate boxes in there. Seagull Software was the only one that met the requirements for keeping it all on one server," said Carter.

Results

By deploying LegaSuite GUI, Clackamas ESD has experienced significant benefits. Now, the process of getting a new user up and running is much easier and faster. To get started, new users are instructed to simply visit a Website and click on a link to begin the download. This deployment method has allowed the school districts to reduce the time and labor necessary for supporting the applications. "LegaSuite GUI has met our expectations, and it's an easy tool to use. So far we've had just one person developing the whole thing. The performance has been very good, and we have certainly had a very good customer service relationship," said Newton.



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