

Palo Alto Unified School District

An Infrastructure for the Education Revolution

“BY UNIFYING OUR HUNDREDS OF TEACHERS AND STAFF, ITS BECOME A PART OF THE CULTURE OF HOW WE COMMUNICATE. BUT WE NEED THE TECHNOLOGY TO BE PART OF THE BACKGROUND - RELIABLE AND EFFORTLESS. MIRAPPOINT DOES THAT FOR US.”

Marie Scigliano, Director, Palo Alto Unified School

CASE STUDY | EDUCATION



BUSINESS NEED

Reliable, low-cost, highly functional email server to facilitate communication at the district office as well as 16 school sites

SOLUTION

Mirapoint Message Server

BOTTOM LINE

Mirapoint created a unique cost effective solution with its flexible architecture

Background

Palo Alto Unified School District is located on the northern edge of California's Silicon Valley and has become a model of innovation for other school districts around the country both technologically and educationally. Palo Alto Unified's commitment to excellence in education can be easily seen by walking through any of its 16 schools, many of which are undergoing extensive refits and upgrades to allow technology to become a natural partner in the districts primary mission of teaching children.

Palo Alto uses email to facilitate communication between 1500 users at the district office and 16 school sites. Email is also increasingly important in allowing parents and students to communicate with teachers and administrators throughout the district.

The Business Need

Email had become a mission critical component of daily operations at Palo Alto, and they desperately needed a system that was robust, scalable, and above all, reliable. The District had already implemented two email systems, neither of which had met its needs. "School districts, because we're non-profit, tend to buy things that do a thousand things," said Marie Scigliano, Director, Palo Alto Unified School District. "We had email nightmares. I was getting up at two in the morning, logging in to make sure the boxes were up." The first system didn't scale to meet growing demand, and the second required a proprietary client that demanded a high level of re-training for the District's users.

"We have the non-user who knows how to point and click - to the very sophisticated user. So having the ability to have the software you know and are familiar with is important. If you like Outlook, you can use Outlook. If you like Eudora, you can use Eudora," said Scigliano. "Having the ability to allow the end user to select their client interface is essential." The district found not only were they spending valuable time and resources training personnel on their email system, some teachers had older computers that weren't compatible at all. "We had an inflexible operating system and there were several things you just couldn't do," says Christopher Grant, the System Administrator at Palo Alto Unified. "And we had no security against third party relay, which meant anyone in the world could connect through our mail server and send email."



Palo Alto Unified School District

The Mirapoint Solution

The District needed a solution fast, so Ms. Scigliano put together a committee - including parents, staff, teachers, and technical advisors - and gave them a month to make a recommendation. After reviewing various options, the committee chose Mirapoint.

Due to the District's relatively low volume, Mirapoint created a unique cost-effective solution with its flexible architecture. Mirapoint installed a single Mirapoint Message Server M200 to store and route email throughout the system using Lightweight Directory Application Protocol (LDAP). Mail is then directed to four M200s that host the district's school domains: one at each of the Secondary and Middle schools. To help with ongoing administration, Mirapoint created an intuitive web based interface that allows Palo Alto to easily administer, manage and control their domains and accounts. By including Webmail Direct, users are able to securely access messages from any Web-enabled device. Since Mirapoint is compatible with all standard email protocols and software, the new email works on state of the art systems as well as on ten year old PCs and Macs. Another benefit is that the District's users are able to select whether to download all messages to their local client or leave their messages on the server to be accessed from another device at a later time. This ability is crucial for teachers who teach at more than one location and may not have an assigned workstation.

The Bottom Line

The Mirapoint safe messaging infrastructure protects the District from expensive hacker and virus attacks, but doesn't require costly and time-consuming user training. With Mirapoint's 24/7 service contract, Marie Scigliano is no longer getting up at two o'clock in the morning to check on the email system. As a result, the Mirapoint solution has allowed the Palo Alto School District to do what it does best: teach children. "Email is core to what we do," said Marie. "And now it's working really well." adds Grant.

About Mirapoint

Mirapoint® is the market leader in appliance-based solutions for secure message networks in enterprise, service provider, and education organizations, with more than 100 million mailboxes served and secured worldwide. Customers use Mirapoint appliances including the Message Server mail appliance and RazorGate mail security appliance to build the messaging infrastructure that intelligently serves, secures and manages email. Mirapoint is headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, with offices throughout North America, Europe and Asia. For more information on Mirapoint, visit its Website at www.mirapoint.com.

Configuration

- One Mirapoint Message Server M200 with Webmail and virus scanning
- Four Mirapoint Message Servers M200 with 62GB each