

CASE STUDY

COST-SAVINGS AND EFFICIENCY

CREATING A SINGLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR DISTRICT WORK



USER

Forsyth County Schools

of Students: 46,000

of Schools: 37



CHALLENGE

Maximize limited resources and provide easy access to district data for all stakeholders.



SOLUTION

Using Simbli's Cost Savings Calculator, the district estimates saving \$15,000+ annually in paper and personnel costs alone for board and leadership meetings. Remote access to data, including using the Meetings software iPad app, facilitates efficiency.

Facing shrinking budgets and a dire need to "accomplish more with less," Forsyth County Schools sought to adopt a board management software solution to help them bring their meetings online. What they found in Simbli far exceeded their expectations.

SIMBLI: THE SINGLE SOURCE OF DISTRICT INFORMATION

In 2006, Forsyth County Schools began using Simbli to manage their board policies. They now use it for planning, meetings and evaluations, but have recently maximized the use of the Meetings software to include internal and public meetings at both the school and district levels.

Meeting agenda items are closely tied to district and school organizational goals. Agendas are developed through the built-in submitter, and approver workflow and minutes are taken using the built-in minutes and vote-recording capabilities.

The district continues to educate community stakeholders about Simbli and the wealth of information available about the work of the district. It is quickly becoming *THE* source for information about Forsyth County Schools.

"The ability to go to one central location helps thousands of people throughout our district access information perhaps not readily available just a few short years ago," said Dr. Valery Lang Hall, governance coordinator for Forsyth County Schools. "By having this information in one central location, stakeholders can better understand and access information that is pivotal to the success of our school district."

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN A DATA-DRIVEN COMMUNITY

In addition to expanding the use of Simbli at the board level, Forsyth County embarked upon getting all of their 35 school communities at the time up and running with their Local School Council (LSC) management. This effort is further aligned back to the district's strategic planning goals, and the board is able to use this information in their decision-making.

"Forsyth County is a very data-driven community, so transparency and accountability is a must," said Dr. Hall. "Simbli has revolutionized the timely access and quality of information available to all of our stakeholders. Simbli is our key to transparency and accountability, and an education hub for our entire school system."

A TOOL FOR SEAMLESS GOVERNANCE

Simbli has been instrumental in helping Forsyth County align the work of the board and district leadership, as well as guide new board members and staff, said Dr. Hall.

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AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

Forsyth County Schools

2012

Best Use of Simbli Meetings software

3rd Place Best Overall Use of Simbli

2nd Place Best Use of Strategic Plan software

2011

2nd Place Best Use of Simbli Meetings software

2009

3rd Place National Digital School District Survey

DISTRICT RECOGNITION

NSBA 20 to Watch

NSBA Ed Tech Site Visit Host

NSBA Salute District

National Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence

“Without Simbli, Forsyth County Schools would not have the seamless process of governance that we are so proud of,” she noted. “Simbli is the organizational leverage that assists us in aligning the work of Forsyth County Schools, and is a topic of conversation any time we discuss alignment. Starting with the development of our strategic plan goals and action steps, the board and system leadership have the ability to make decisions based on this guidance.”

She added that the recommended flow of policy development helps the district make changes and implement new policies, as well as provides a firm record of historical actions. “It’s a process that we follow strictly, which further aligns our work,” said Dr. Hall. “This also becomes key when new board members and staff members emerge.”

In times of transition, Forsyth County depends on Simbli to explain the work of the district and uses it as a constant way to monitor and track progress towards meeting strategic plan goals.

DOING MORE WITH LESS

“With declining revenues and trying to do more with less, leadership staff continue to emerge with ideas which leverage Simbli,” she said. “We were very fortunate to be a pilot district from its inception, so this spawned the use of Simbli for policy and procedures, as well as the area of meeting development. It seems like every month or so, we continue to add ways to use the solution.”

The district also uses the Simbli Cost Savings Calculator to demonstrate how moving their board materials online has helped them save time and money.

“The cost-savings calculator is evidence alone for any district,” said Dr. Hall. “Simbli also allows our busy board members, staff and local school council members the ability to access and research information from remote locations – both past and present.”

GETTING BUY-IN ACROSS THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Dr. Hall shared a few best practices for districts getting started with Simbli:

- Don’t be intimidated by expanding use, even if just one software at a time
- Get support from the superintendent and other leaders within the school system
- Appoint one person as the lead advocate for Simbli in the district who can market, motivate and educate stakeholders to gain collective buy-in

“We feel like Forsyth County Schools serves as a trailblazer district in the use of Simbli,” said Dr. Hall. “Because we’ve been so involved from inception, it’s easy to paint a before-and-after story around the benefits behind each decision we’ve made, and how it has revolutionized the way we communicate with our educational stakeholders.”

ABOUT FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

Forsyth County Schools is located in Cumming, Ga. and is the seventh largest school system in the state. The district is home to more than 46,000 students and has 37 schools: 21 elementary, 10 middle and six high schools. The Forsyth County Board of Education is the governing body of the Forsyth County School System. The primary role of the board is the legislation of school system policies.

“DOING MORE AND SAVING MORE. DESPITE LIMITED RESOURCES, SIMBLI IS QUICKLY BECOMING THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON THE DISTRICT. AND IT’S HELPING BOARD MEMBERS GET MORE DONE.”

Dr. Valery Lang Hall, governance coordinator, Forsyth County Schools

