



K-12 DISTRICTS TURN TO THE CLOUD FOR BACK-OFFICE MODERNIZATION

“WE NO LONGER WANTED TO BE IN THE BUSINESS OF OWNING AND MAINTAINING OUR OWN DATA CENTERS. WE WANT TO BE IN THE BUSINESS OF EDUCATING.”

Pam Willingham, Project Manager of ERP and SIS,
Volusia County Schools, Florida

Volusia County isn't alone. Increasingly, districts across the country — including Shelby County Schools in Memphis, Tennessee — are turning to cloud solutions to modernize their back-office processes. Cloud solutions can create tremendous efficiencies that free up time, money, infrastructure and other resources so districts can focus on providing a world-class education to students. Crucial to the success of these back-office transformations is the involvement of a trusted cloud implementation firm like CherryRoad Technologies Inc., an Oracle platinum-level consulting partner with more than 25 years of experience in modernizing, optimizing and managing complex back-office processes and technologies for school districts, higher education institutions, and state and local organizations.

VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS: REDUCING TCO AND IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES

Volusia County Schools in Florida serves approximately 65,000 K-12 students. Over the years, it has run its legacy data center and back-office applications on premises, meaning it had to invest in and maintain the data center, upgrade it as needed, manage disaster recovery and more. When it came time to modernize the back office, the district considered, and then rejected, an on-premise solution. Technology had gotten in the way of servicing the users.

Instead, the district decided to move to a cloud-based Oracle solution, supported by CherryRoad, that provides a wide range of business capabilities while enabling unified visibility and control.

“Volusia carefully considered the total cost of ownership (TCO),” says Willingham, who oversees the district’s enterprise resource planning (ERP) and student information system (SIS) implementations. “We looked at a five-year model for TCO. The upfront cost of an implementation of this size, with world-class software like Oracle’s, is sizable, but it was important to do it right to position the district for the long run.”

The district found it could save money overall by transferring data center costs (e.g., personnel, maintenance, power, cooling, and rack and floor space) to the cloud vendor instead of operating infrastructure in house.

Another decisive factor was Oracle’s Platinum Partner CherryRoad and its implementation methodology.

“With CherryRoad’s methodology, we liked the idea that we would have a prototype early, that we would get our hands dirty early, and that the process would be iterative,” says Willingham. “The other reason we selected CherryRoad was due to its public sector experience.”

Using the solution, Volusia County Schools expects to:

- Secure data access so district leaders and staff can make informed decisions regardless of their location or device
- Support data-driven decision-making
- Implement employee self-service (e.g., to change contact information in benefits and payroll applications)
- Standardize purchasing and other business processes
- Eliminate duplicate data entry for purchase orders, payroll and other processes
- Obtain a single, consistent version of the truth
- Streamline workflows for grants, projects, budgets and other processes that have historically been paper-based

“CLOUD APPLICATIONS ALLOW K-12 ORGANIZATIONS TO BRING ACCOUNTABILITY AND MODERN ERP PRACTICES TO THE BACK OFFICE, LETTING SCHOOLS GET BACK TO THEIR CORE MISSION OF EDUCATION.”

Larry Hymson, Executive Vice President, Client Services, CherryRoad



NAVIGATING CHANGE THE EASY WAY

Back-office modernization can be a huge undertaking. Many school districts find the complexity and sheer scope of such a change requires the assistance of a consulting firm with demonstrated expertise. Both Volusia County Schools and Shelby County Schools chose CherryRoad to support them in their transformation after being impressed with its cloud-oriented methodology, processes and training; its full range of services; and its long-term support. CherryRoad has worked with numerous K-12 districts for more than 25 years and has been recognized as Oracle's Public Sector Innovation Partner of the Year.

Willingham with Volusia County Schools speaks to the value of working with CherryRoad: "We have 8,000 employees and are changing virtually every process in the district. CherryRoad's change management experts understand the complexity of the transition and the emotions associated with that. They have been great at educating change agents at every school."

By working with the right partner and using cloud-based solutions, districts of any size can catapult their back-office organizations into the 21st century and position themselves for the future. The following best practices will further set up districts for success:

- ✔ **Define business processes.** Knowing how and why departments do things will help a district identify opportunities for improvement and lay the groundwork for drafting an RFP.
- ✔ **Identify staffing needs early.** Determine needs for the project (business leads as well as technical leads), and identify their current responsibilities and how their roles will be filled while they are on the project.
- ✔ **Include business SMEs.** Identify subject matter experts (SMEs) in the departments where business processes occur and involve them in the project so they understand what they're getting and can champion the project with other faculty and staff.
- ✔ **Seek budgeting help.** Modernization requires a long-term financial plan. The Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS), the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and other organizations can supply guidance on how to sustain projects over time.
- ✔ **Address data protection.** Be prepared to show how sensitive data will be protected and how the district will comply with government regulations related to financial information, health care records, student privacy and more.

SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS: ACCELERATING DEPLOYMENT, REDUCING RISK AND LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Founded in 1867, Shelby County Schools in Tennessee has grown to serve 110,000 students in 49 schools. Four years ago, the district merged with Memphis City Schools, intensifying the need to modernize its legacy back-office system, which did not have the functionality or resources to support the larger, more complex district.

As the first step toward transformation, the district is working with CherryRoad to implement cloud-based financial and human capital management (HCM) applications running on an Oracle cloud infrastructure. The Oracle solution will allow the district to roll everything out incrementally, putting less demand on IT and minimizing disruption and risk.

Oracle's state-of-the-art infrastructure provides storage, processing, scaling, security and integration capabilities that the district would not be able to achieve on its own. Applications run faster, are more secure and seamlessly integrate. And the district can easily expand its solution set over time. Ultimately, the district's solution will incorporate transportation, procurement, contracting and other applications.

"The goal is to get as many of our business operations into that single system as possible. Doing so will turn us into a very efficient organization — with new capabilities and opportunities," says John Williams, CIO for the district.

Another important advantage of a cloud-based solution is that it will help the district address IT staffing challenges.

"It's difficult to keep the skill level that you need in the district, especially in an area that is competitive for workers. We can't offer the salaries that skilled staff can get in the private sector," says Williams.

With a cloud-based system, the vendor — not the IT team — handles updates and upgrades.

"Not having to deal with that at the school level takes a lot of pressure off the IT team," says Williams. "We have also been able to leverage our implementation partner CherryRoad's deep bench of experienced K-12 consultants to supply additional staffing resources as needed."

Lastly, a cloud-based system promotes consistency, security and productivity by ensuring every office in the district is working with the most current software and with constantly improved functionality.