

# GRAND PRAIRIE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



## Client



## Operational Inefficiencies—Eliminated by Skyward

The Grand Prairie Independent School District (GPISD) is the largest employer in Grand Prairie, Texas with approximately 3,063 employees, 25,500 students and 38 campuses, including 25 elementary schools, seven middle schools, two ninth-grade centers, two high schools and two alternative education schools. For over 25 years the organization relied on an AS400 Main Frame solution running a combination of DB2 and DB3 databases to manage both its business operations and student management processes. Two years ago the organization realized it needed to update its systems in order to run a more efficient business and, more importantly, better serve the needs of its students.

## Challenge

Better serve the needs of its students.

## Solution

The Progress® OpenEdge®-based Student Management Suite and the School Business Suite from Progress® Application Partner Skyward

## Benefit

Control information quadrupled in the first 30 days, report generation time spent to meet state requirements reduced from 16-32 hours to the click of a button, and GPISD expects a 100% ROI in 3-4 years

Because all of GPISD's processing was done in batches employees were unable to access real-time data that was critical to helping the business move forward. Lyle DuBus, Executive Director of Instructional Delivery for GPISD explains: "I would get budget reports that were 60-90 days old, so we developed our own Access database product so I see real-time financial information. Essentially we had to work around the system rather than having it work for us."

Without easy access to information, many processes were tedious and time-consuming, and most had to be performed manually. For example, to prepare for a third-party audit which was required by law, the business office would close down for 60-90 days to get ready because there was such a lag time associated with its systems and most of the information had to be obtained manually.

GPISD's IT department spent a tremendous amount of time and effort just trying to keep the system up-to-date. "It lacked the flexibility we needed to serve the needs of our employees and students," says DuBus. For example, in order to process data they had to close down the system every night around 10:00 pm. So anyone working late was unable to access the information they may need to do their jobs.

"It became painfully clear that our current system could no longer accommodate our needs," says DuBus. "We required a modern, sophisticated technology that could provide us with 24/7 access to real-time information, the ability to integrate with our existing and future systems in order to streamline our processes, visibility across our entire organization, and the flexibility to meet our growing and changing needs."

## **Skyward Offers Proven Technology and Rapid Implementation**

As they searched for a new solution, DuBus and his team looked for a system that offered ease of use for campus personnel so they could access the information they needed with the minimal number of clicks. GPISD also wanted a fully integrated package that had already been used consistently and successfully in Texas by other districts. "We did not want to be the pioneer using the system for the first time," says DuBus. "We required a proven technology and access to a strong network of local users if we had any questions."

The district's superintendent and business manager were very familiar with Skyward and put the vendor on their short list of possibilities. Skyward invited GPISD to a Texas user group conference to learn more about the technology and to speak with existing local Skyward customers.

"We were extremely impressed with Skyward. The Texas Branch Manager for Skyward knew all of the attendees by their first names; you could tell they had a very strong relationship, and we really felt like we were part of a family."

GPISD also had an aggressive implementation schedule of six months. "The other vendors we looked at were not able to meet our timeline. In fact, one said it would take 18 months; that was unacceptable to us. But Skyward didn't even blink; they assured us that they could meet our deadline. That was impressive."

## **Progress OpenEdge Provides an Industry-Leading, Reliable, Flexible and Low-Maintenance Platform**

One of the most critical elements to GPISD's new solution was that it had to offer a platform that was completely reliable, provided the flexibility to meet their changing needs, and required very little maintenance. DuBus explains: "We are a very small IT department. We knew that for us to be successful our new solution had to be built on a foundation that was totally reliable and worked right out of the box. We did not have the luxury of adding additional staff or spending our time constantly tweaking the system to meet our requirements. Our existing employees needed the ability to focus on our core business, which is educating 26,000 kids."

Skyward's systems are built on the Progress OpenEdge database. DuBus was unfamiliar with Progress OpenEdge at the time, and so he asked his fellow peers if they had any experience with the platform. "The overwhelming response I received was that OpenEdge is a very flexible, solid system that requires little to no maintenance—that it just works. I started doing my own research into

Progress, and I realized that it has a huge customer base including Fortune 500 companies that use OpenEdge as the backbone product to run their business. I thought if it is good enough for companies like Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, it must be good enough for us.”

## Skyward and Progress OpenEdge the Clear Choice

After evaluating all of its different options, GPISD chose Skyward’s Student Management Suite and School Business Suite. The Student Management Suite ensures students succeed by providing real-time, accurate, and reliable information through a Web portal for easy access. The School Business Suite is a comprehensive, integrated finance and human resources solution that provides administrators, educators and staff with invaluable information at their fingertips.

Both Skyward systems are built on the Progress OpenEdge integrated platform. Used in over 90% of Fortune 500 companies, OpenEdge is an industry leader in embedded databases. In a recent IDC study, OpenEdge was rated the #1 pure-play embedded database on the market, and Aberdeen Group and InfoStructure Association noted that OpenEdge administrative costs are 74% less than Oracle’s and 37% less than Microsoft’s. Today 5,000 distinct applications in over 60,000 organizations worldwide are developed with OpenEdge. And Progress Application Partners deploy their software at more than 10,000 new sites for 600,000 new users every year.

## Skyward Beats Aggressive Implementation Schedule

True to their word, Skyward met GPISD’s implementation schedule in just four months for business systems. “From a conversion and service aspect we have been thrilled at what Skyward has brought to the table. Skyward’s project

“We expect a 100% return on our investment (ROI) within three to four years. And we believe we will see some instant cost savings in the next school year. That money will go back into the classroom and support services.”

Lyle DuBus  
Executive Director  
Instructional Delivery  
GPISD

management has been superb. Without a doubt they have been our partner throughout the entire process and are still there for us today when we have questions. They have been a joy to work with—there has never been a hiccup, never a problem.”

## Moving its Entire IT Infrastructure In-House and Modernizing its Systems— without Adding Staff

Prior to choosing Skyward, GPISD tried an ASP-based school management system for one year. Not only was the system unable to meet their needs, but the district was also unhappy with the ASP model and wanted to move all of its data in-house. With Skyward, DuBus and his team now have total control over their systems and their information. “I have a great network infrastructure. We run 40 miles of underground fiber, and I have a generator and a district network room that rivals most in the industry. Having this infrastructure and our Skyward systems in-house gives us the responsibility for our own data. And the amazing part is that we have moved everything in-house and completely updated our systems without adding additional head count because Skyward essentially runs itself.”

GPISD is already using the School Business Suite and in June it will begin the process of training the 3000 users who will be using the Student Management Suite when the new school year begins in the fall. “This system will touch literally every part of the district including the custodial staff, teachers, nurses and business managers. Everyone will be empowered to use this system.”

## **Increased Efficiency, Improved Productivity, and Visibility and Control of the Business**

Within just a few months of implementation, GPISD is already achieving substantial business results. “I feel like we have literally jumped 30 years into the future, like we are finally doing business in 2009 instead of being stuck in 1979.” Many of GPISD’s previous manual processes have now been automated, freeing up employees’ time and improving the accuracy of the processes. “I was in our purchasing office last week, and I noticed stacks of absence from duty forms that were being disposed of. With our new School Business Suite we have eliminated that form and that manual process—to me that is real change. We no longer need one person in the office dedicating hours to completing these forms. Instead the responsibility has been pushed out to our employees, who now submit their own forms via the system. That is certainly improving our productivity and freeing up resources to focus on higher priority tasks.”

Before using Skyward, GPISD was also managing the requisition process manually. DuBus explains: “We had one person dedicating at least one half of every day to filling out these requisition forms. Today the campuses are able to submit the purchase orders themselves. Just this one automated process alone is saving our business 20 work hours per week; that is phenomenal.”

With the ability to easily track and analyze information GPISD has also gained visibility and achieved greater control over its business. “Our visibility has been

dramatically improved and our control over our information has quadrupled in the last 30 days. It is a night-and-day difference,” says DuBus. “From a decision-making standpoint we will now be able to better understand our spending and the success of our programs. For example, if we delegate funds for a specific program, we can later go back and track the success of that program and determine if there is a correlation between student improvement and the increase in funding. In our older system that type of information was not easy to come by.”

The system is also delivering benefits that GPISD did not anticipate. “Because our employees can spend less time on manual processes and quickly access the information they need to do their jobs, I think we will also see an increase in job satisfaction because people will be able to dedicate their time to more interesting projects and to helping the kids. I think over time this will also result in a reduction in our costs.”

## **Improved Reporting Capabilities and Increased Accuracy of Information**

GPISD anticipates that the Student Management Suite will radically improve their ability to run reports, meet state requirements, improve funding and meet the changing needs of the business.

Texas and California have some of the most complex and stringent state reporting mandates in the nation in terms of the type of information districts are required to provide to the state department of education. “Our funding is completely dependent on accurate reporting. Before using Skyward we had to create a lot of our own reports to meet the requirements, which on average took us 8-16 hours a day for one to two days. With our new system the reports already exist—we are able to just hit a button and go. And without a doubt we are far more confident that the information is accurate. Skyward has a tremendous amount of experience with those reporting requirements,

and they pro-actively stay on top of any changes. If the requirements change, they immediately provide us with an update; that takes an enormous amount of pressure off of us and gives us a lot of confidence.”

DuBus says the system also offers them the flexibility they were looking for. “For example, we participate in something we call an optional, flexible school day program for alternative schools. We had a problem getting our old system compliant with that waiver for the alternative school. When we told Skyward about this issue, their response was ‘we already have something written and ready for you.’ That showed me how proactive they are and how much they truly understand our business. Within 30-45 days of the rules being released by our state agency Skyward already had a solution ready and rolled out.”

## Progress OpenEdge Meets High Expectations

DuBus and his team have been very happy with the Progress OpenEdge platform. “We have had no problems at all—it has just worked and that is exactly what we needed. Now all of our efforts go to using the information

to impact our business versus trying to just maintain the system.”

Progress’s low total cost of ownership is also proving to be a significant benefit to the district. “We expect a 100% return on our investment (ROI) within three to four years. And we believe we will see some instant cost savings in the next school year. That money will go back into the classroom and support services. It is also going to help us balance the budget and keep us out of our fund reserve.”

## Skyward—A Partner for the Future

Next year GPISD has plans to further leverage its Skyward solutions to streamline information dispersal throughout its other systems. “We want to be able to do a single data input for a student or employee and have that information populate through all of the different systems, for example our library system, transportation system, etc. If a new student enrolls at 8:00 am, I want him in the system so we can feed him at noon. I believe that with Skyward and Progress we will be able to easily meet this goal and any other needs we have down the road.”



### About Skyward

Since 1980, Skyward has been serving the K-12 Administrative software needs of school districts. Today, Skyward’s School Management Systems™ are found in over 1,300 school districts throughout the United States and internationally. Skyward’s School Management System represents an integrated student and financial management software system designed to keep administrators, educators, and families connected. For more information visit: [www.skyward.com](http://www.skyward.com)

### About Progress

Progress (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global leader in application development, empowering the digital transformation organizations need to create and sustain engaging user experiences in today’s evolving marketplace. With offerings spanning web, mobile and data for on-premises and cloud environments, Progress powers startups and industry titans worldwide, promoting success one customer at a time. Learn about Progress at [www.progress.com](http://www.progress.com) or 1-781-280-4000.

Progress and OpenEdge are trademarks or registered trademarks of Progress Software Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries or affiliates in the U.S. and/or other countries. Any other trademarks contained herein are the property of their respective owners.

© 2017 Progress Software Corporation and/or its subsidiaries or affiliates. All rights reserved.  
Rev 2017/01

