



Client



Skyward Soars Higher with myDistrict360

New Analytics Solution Sharpens Focus for School Administrators

As an industry leader in education management focused on helping school districts achieve success, Skyward, Inc., along with Progress, developed myDistrict360—a learning analytics solution to aid teaching and manage district efficiencies, based on Progress® OpenEdge® Analytics360™.

Challenge

Find or develop an intuitive and robust data analytics tool for school administrators to use to increase student productivity and improve school financials

Solution

Partner with Progress to develop a new intuitive, robust solution to help school district personnel analyze critical student and financial related data

Benefit

Remove barriers for administration to increase student outcomes and improve financial management to reduce costs

Skyward History

In 1980, Jim King & Associates was formed to develop custom software and system design services for a number of applications. A year later, the firm developed a software solution for Wisconsin's Merrill Public School District. By 1984, Jim King & Associates narrowed their development focus and incorporated as School Administration Software, Inc. A decade later, as more school systems adopted their school management solutions, the firm, then flying the flag of Skyward, Inc., had grown into a major player in the school administration software market.

Technology evolves rapidly, and forward thinking vendors always keep a sharp eye focused on finding better ways to serve their clients and attract new ones. For this reason, Skyward partnered with Progress in 2005.

When compared to other application development platforms, Progress with its OpenEdge Advanced Business Language (ABL) proved easier and far less time consuming to develop business applications and solutions for K-12 school districts. The Progress® OpenEdge® platform enables developers to create applications easily and with a faster time to market.

Progress-based applications are portable across computing systems, which allows access to various data sources without the need to understand complex data access methods.

The Progress Partnership

Prior to working with Progress, Skyward successfully provided multiple data analytics options to their 1,800 school district client base. Over time, through the feedback of customers, Skyward recognized the need for a more flexible and intuitive analytics solution that school administrators could utilize in their decision making process. There was a desire to engage and encourage all stakeholders—from superintendents to teachers—to use the information maintained in the Skyward School Management System for keen insight and enhanced decision making. Since a more robust solution was needed, Skyward was faced with the ambitious task of either finding or developing a new solution to better suit the needs of their customers. It was then that they reached out to Progress.

OpenEdge Analytics360 Business Intelligence Solution

Skyward reviewed other solutions in the market and found that many of the solutions were either overly complex for the user or too cost prohibitive for the public schools they served.

Skyward had already collaborated with Progress on past projects and understood their expertise in the business intelligence space. Also, it was most important that the two firms had a history of working well together. It was clear to Skyward, after reviewing all the existing options, that Progress OpenEdge Analytics360 was the best solution for their needs. And since they could white label the

“I was really impressed with the tenacity of Progress to make sure that they had it all working well and that they met our needs and expectations for the solution.”

Ray Ackerlund, VP of Marketing & Product Management
Skyward, Inc.

product and embed it into their application, the choice was even easier. Ray Ackerlund, Skyward VP of Marketing and Product Management, stated, “After discussing at length our needs and goals we found that Progress could design a solution with the functionality we wanted, at a price point that our K-12 customers could afford.”

Success Factors

Every new business intelligence solution comes with its own unique set of challenges, especially in developing and implementing, and myDistrict360 is not an exception. The idea of “one size fits all” rarely applies to any software, and was true with this project because every school and every district has their own particular subset of needs and challenges.

The Progress team interviewed the Skyward team as well as end users to get a good feel for the KPIs (key performance indicators) needed for each role: superintendent, principal and teacher. They agreed early on that the business intelligence solution needed to be a “plug and play” solution geared toward the end user and not the IT department. The team envisioned a solution where there would be no need to write code to extract the data. To accomplish this, Progress implemented OpenEdge Analytics360, rebranded myDistrict360 by Skyward.

Among the options built into myDistrict360, Progress developed an ad-hoc report builder, which allows end users to build custom reports and dashboards. For mobility, myDistrict360 is 100% web-based and 100% secure, which allows teachers and the school administration to access data remotely and, most importantly, securely on their tablets from any location.

Since myDistrict360

The response to myDistrict360 has been most favorable and many clients are impressed with the user-centric nature of the solution. Others have said they really like that they can “jump right in and use it.” The ability to create custom dashboards and alerts makes it easy for school districts to use the solution.

Clients who use Skyward’s School Management System that includes a student information system and business management system can bring all their data together to review from a single portal. This allows for consolidation and provides a true 360-degree view of the district’s entire operation from a student management and fiscal/HR perspective.

According to Ray Ackerlund, “The biggest thing for Skyward is that myDistrict360 allows us to provide a well-rounded solution for our customers. The use of data is increasingly more important for school districts because they need to identify trends and areas of improvement to be successful. This solution helps solidify our system as the entire package—everything that a school system needs to manage and analyze all of their data.”

Collaborative efforts of Skyward and Progress were key to the success of myDistrict360. This kind of success has played out time and time again for the partnership.

According to Sean Garguilo, Progress, “The advantage to our solution is that it’s very easy to use. The other two major solutions in the marketplace are made more for the power user—a user who really understands analytics and data discovery. On the other hand, with myDistrict360, the

end user has immediate role-relevant access to their data and that’s where we provide the most value. Another plus is stability. Those in education spend an inordinate amount of time gathering data for various purposes. myDistrict360 is very stable. And this is just the beginning.”

The Future of myDistrict360

Progress stands ready to assist myDistrict360 clients with support or changes in process, standards, or government regulations. In the absence of IT staffs at local schools, the Progress team is prepared to respond quickly to the changing needs of myDistrict360 clients.

About myDistrict360

myDistrict360 is a comprehensive, role-based analytics suite, which allows school administrators at both school and district levels to identify issues before they become problematic. This role-based tool serves as an early warning system for superintendents, principals and teachers and reveals trending analytics regarding testing, discipline and attendance as well as finances.



About Skyward, Inc.

As a strategic partner with school districts, we combine thought leadership, best practices and an integrated student and business management solution to help administrators improve student performance, reduce operating costs and increase efficiencies that ultimately drives their school district to achieve success. Our comprehensive student information system provides powerful learning analytics dashboards, enhanced communication tools to increase parent involvement and digital tools to support learning models that increase student engagement.

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-premise and cloud environments, Progress powers startups and industry titans worldwide, promoting success one customer at a time. Learn about Progress at www.progress.com or 1-781-280-4000.

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