



**Customer:** School District 23  
**Website:** [www.sd23.bc.ca](http://www.sd23.bc.ca)  
**Customer Size:** 3,000 employees  
**Country or Region:** Canada  
**Industry:** Education

#### Customer Profile

Based in the city of Kelowna, School District No. 23 serves more than 22,000 children from kindergarten to grade 12 in 42 schools across the central Okanagan region of British Columbia.

#### Software and Services

- Microsoft Office 365
  - Microsoft Exchange Online

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## School District Extends Learning Beyond the Classroom with Online Productivity Tools

**“With Office 365, we are giving students the business productivity tools that they’ll use in the workplace. When they graduate, they’ll be ahead of the game.”**

*Jon Rever, Director of Instruction, School District 23*

School District 23 replaced its outdated email solution with Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 for staff and Microsoft Office 365 for students, who now use their PCs, laptops, and mobile phones to communicate with one another and their teachers through cloud-based email and instant messaging. This hybrid deployment fosters connected learning, helps students work more productively, and will reduce email costs by 90 percent over five years.

### Business Needs

School District 23 (SD 23) has always used technology to promote learning. It is one of a few school districts in Canada to offer email service and online collaboration sites for students in grades 4 through 12. Each of its 42 schools boasts a wireless network. “We teach students how to use technology tools to increase communication and collaboration skills and improve their learning,” says Jon Rever, Director of Instruction who is responsible for technology at School District 23.

The on-premises email and collaboration solution that SD 23 staff and students used was built on old technologies and the existing system was no longer meeting the

expectations of users. In addition to email, the SD 23 community relied on the solution’s intranet-based collaboration spaces that served as forums for parents, teachers, staff, and students. As the existing solution became increasingly unstable, services were disrupted. “We restarted servers frequently and the SD community lost confidence in the solution,” says David Norrish, Learning Technology Manager at School District 23. “Due to high storage costs, we could only offer 80 megabyte inboxes. Students couldn’t access email on their mobile devices, and teachers were not promoting the service to students as frequently as we would have liked.”

The district thought about upgrading to the latest version of its on-premises solution, but IT staff was disappointed in the scarcity of new features and the specialized support that the solution required. SD 23 wanted an easily deployed and maintained hybrid solution that offered the latest interoperable on-site and cloud-based messaging and collaboration services for faculty and students. "We wanted a solution that offered a flexible mobile platform, that was secure and reliable, and that would support our vision for connected learning," says Rever.

## Solution

School District 23 decided to deploy a combination of cloud-based and on-premises technologies from Microsoft. For students, it chose Microsoft Office 365 for education. Microsoft Office 365 unites familiar Microsoft Office applications with the power of Microsoft productivity servers into one connected, online solution.

"We chose Office 365 because we wanted students to use enterprise-level tools that are found in organizations throughout the world," says Rever. "We know Microsoft technology is always evolving and would support our vision for mobility: the ability for students to use any Wi-Fi-enabled device to access their work and with teachers and peers, from anywhere they have an Internet connection."

To comply with privacy legislation, the district deployed Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 and Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 on-premises for staff. Both students and staff are in the district's global address list, so the on-premises and online services work together seamlessly. "Integrating Office 365 into our on-premises environment answered our needs for a hybrid solution,"

says Rever. "Students use Microsoft Exchange Online for their email and Lync Online for IM [instant messaging] and presence. Our entire community can use the SharePoint Server solution to collaborate on district business or school-based learning. We looked at Google Apps for Education, but it didn't offer this flexible hybrid model."

SD 23 deployed its on-premises solution in March 2012. By September, IT staff had enabled federation between Office 365 and the on-premises Exchange Server solution and provisioned the students' mailboxes. The district mailed permission letters so that families could provide an informed consent for students to use the online services. "The response was overwhelmingly positive: in less than three months, 35 percent of our students had activated their accounts—that is more than we had at any time during the 10 years of our previous solution," says Rever.

## Benefits

By adopting Office 365, School District 23 strengthens its reputation for innovation in applying technology to learning. It is the first school district in Canada to deploy cloud-based and on-premises services to students using a hybrid model. "With Office 365, we are giving students the business productivity tools that they'll use in the workplace," says Rever. "When they graduate, they'll be ahead of the game."

## Strengthened the Learning Community

SD 23 considers its Office 365 hybrid deployment as the IT foundation for a connected learning community that expands beyond the classroom. "Now it's easy for students to connect with teachers: all they need to know is their names," says Norrish. "Students can use mobile phones

or home computers to send an IM or email, or discover if a teacher is away. With everyone working in the same environment, we can achieve seamless communications."

## Expanded Students' Work Environments

Today, SD 23 expects to see students working on school projects outside of the classroom. For example, students can use Office 365 to edit documents on their mobile phones while riding the bus to school and to email homework to teachers before class. Students can check the calendars of other students to schedule weekend meetings for their projects, or perform simultaneous edits from their homes to documents stored in online meeting spaces.

"The continual evolution of Office 365 fits our vision for connected learning and was part of our rationale for choosing the solution," says Rever. "In addition to school computers, students can work from a variety of wireless devices outside of the classroom, accessing their educational program anytime, anywhere and supporting students to reach new levels of productivity."

## Reduced IT Costs

By storing student email in the cloud, SD 23 significantly reduced data storage costs, saving the district approximately US\$500,000 over the next five years. "We spent about \$10.00 per student on the old system, but with Office 365 we estimate that the cost will come down to about \$1.00 per student, despite the fact that Office 365 offers 25-gigabyte inboxes," says Rever. "We're thrilled to be saving money and improving service."