Harford County Public Schools

Company Background

Located along the I-95 corridor midway between Baltimore, MD and Wilmington, DE, the Harford County Public School System is poised to have significant growth in the next 5-10 years due to the relocation of a federal lab. With a student population currently in excess of 40,000, there are 51 schools in the system as well as two educational centers. The county sees no end to its growth due to a continually expanding community.

Industry

Education K-12

Products Used

• AmeriVault Online Backup

Business Situation

Each one of the 51 schools is networked to a central computer center, where a successful community portal serves both internal and external clients. The school system needed to address the security of its large, and ever growing, footprint of sensitive data.

Solution

AmeriVault stores 1.2 terabytes of information and backs up daily changes created from an ERP system that handles financials, human resources, and procurement; Microsoft SQL servers and a Microsoft Exchange email system.

Benefits

• Significantly reduced downtime when replacing lost data

• Consistent, scheduled, automatic data backup in all 50 schools

• Highly secure offsite storage in a tier-1 data center

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>
> Andrew Moore, CIO Harford County Public Schools

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) has been using computers, and backing up the data on those computers, for decades. It started with a mainframe system in the mid-70s. Then, more than 10 years ago, in an effort to integrate technology into the curriculum in all of its schools, HCPS created a network of personal computers and servers. This network now links all 51 individual schools to the central computing center at the main office location.

Today, this system is used by everyone in the school population. Administration uses it for day-to-day activities such as ERP financials, human resources and SQL database applications. Teachers use the system to build and store items such as lesson plans and course work, and to post grades and track student performance with an electronic grade book. Students use the system to work on, save and hand in their homework, projects and assignments. Administrative personnel, support services and instructional staff all use email for effective and timely communication.

The HCPS system now generates and backs up daily 1.2 terabytes of data comprised of all of the above. AmeriVault is their #1 choice when it comes to a backup service and these are their reasons why.

Speed - Mistakes Will Be Made. How Fast Can You Recover?

Prior to using the technology and services provided by AmeriVault, HCPS used tape backup. Network Administrator Craig Killoran commented "In the central office we were pretty good, but we couldn't count on the individual schools for consistency. Most times they'd remember to put a tape in for backup, but sometimes they wouldn't. In addition there was no consistent plan in place for securing the tapes offsite."

In a learning environment such as a public school system, mistakes are often made as part of the learning process. Without initially realizing their mistake, students and even some teachers can easily delete files of importance. Once the error is realized, the usual recovery procedure is to send in a request to IT to replace the file or files. The question then is: How much recovery time and human resource does this take?

"Previously I'd have to contact the school, request that someone put in the backup tape-assuming they could find the right tape and that a backup had been successfully completed-and then I would connect remotely to perform the restore," said Killoran. "It was so slow because it was tape. With AmeriVault, I can launch and restore a file easily without even having to contact the school. It's so much faster and easier now."

Security - Natural Disaster, Terrorism Or Litigation. How Prepared Are You?

With the amount of important and sensitive data HCPS now has as a result of this highly successful technology system, Andrew Moore, HCPS CIO, knew that tape backup wasn't a long-term solution. With disasters like hurricane Katrina and terrorism such as 9/11 and Columbine to think about, he knew HCPS needed a better plan to be able to recover data in the event of a disaster. They needed a consistent backup plan with offsite storage and contingency plans.

The AmeriVault online backup service transmits all data disk-to-disk in encrypted format that only you have access to. With your data stored in a climate controlled, offsite facility and replicated storage to another data center over 1,000 miles away, you are ensured your data will be there for you when and if you need it.

Requests for specific data ordered by legal entities outside the district was something else Moore had to consider when making a change from tape backup. Rather than culling through 1.2 terabytes of data stored on tape, administrators can now perform restores with a few mouse clicks to identify files in older retentions.

Policy - Consistent Enforcement. Are You Gaining All The Benefits?

"Out in the schools, people would forget to put tapes in for backup. Now we don't have to burden them with the task. It's all centralized and automated." Both Moore and Killoran speak with relief now that they use AmeriVault services. AmeriVault provides an automatically scheduled, and completely secure, backup of all the schools and central offices' data. Knowing that its policy on the protection of data is being executed consistently without the element of human error is what gives the greater HCPS organization, and both Moore and Killoran, peace of mind.

However, consistent enforcement of the HCPS data backup procedures is not the only policy related benefit AmeriVault provides HCPS.

From time to time there are policy abuses of the computers in the school system. "The ability to track storage variances is a big help," Killoran pointed out when speaking of AmeriVault's benefits. With every backup, Killoran can pinpoint significant changes in the data. As a result of this, several times students have been found storing personal pictures and videos on the servers-something the policy does not allow for. With tape backup, these files would go unnoticed and enforcement would not happen. The additional cost of resources required to backup a larger data footprint is also eliminated.

Why AmeriVault?

"This is by far the best solution we've ever had for backup" said Moore. AmeriVault provides the only backup service with the data protection and recovery capabilities that address K-12 Educational systems' greatest needs:

- Automated, easy and efficient backup and recovery
- Secure data protection through encryption, and offsite contingency plans
- Seasoned professionals who are there for you when you need them

AmeriVault's solutions address all aspects of your data protection requirements including disciplined backup, secure offsite storage, e-mail archiving and tailored recovery solutions. Plus, our Client Services Team ensures service is optimized and is there for any data emergency, 24/7.

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