



## AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

### RapidIdentity

- Lifecycle
- Authentication
- Governance



*RapidIdentity is a productivity multiplier. My team doesn't have to carry pagers anymore. We're not going to be on call.*

Jon Hurley  
Executive Director of  
Enterprise Applications,  
Austin ISD

Austin Independent School District (ISD) is the fifth-largest public school district in Texas, serving over 74,000 students and spanning 125 locations. Guided by the motto "AISD Anywhere," Austin ISD's technology department follows a cloud-first approach to provide 100,000 students, teachers, and parents greater access to their EdTech tools.

### The Challenge

When choosing an Identity and Access Management (IAM) solution, Austin ISD's Executive Director of Enterprise Applications, Jon Hurley knew it would have to fit into the district's long-term vision for their digital ecosystem. First, the solution would need to create a single, unified infrastructure. Connecting the district's systems and tools—including their student information system (SIS), enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, curriculum tools, and eBooks—would allow for greater security and less backend maintenance.

Second, the IAM solution needed to empower students and teachers to access those tools from anywhere, while making authentication simpler. For Hurley and his team, providing access outside the district's network is critical in today's digital age and one of the reasons why they transitioned to the cloud.

Finally, the solution would have to be commercial-of-the-shelf (COTS). Choosing a vendor that could be configured to meet their needs, but didn't require customization or source code development was a must for Austin ISD and aligned with their strategy of outsourcing capabilities to third parties. "We're educators with a technology focus," Hurley says. "Running a data center, building servers, and developing software aren't our core competencies."



*RapidIdentity is like an iceberg. There's a bunch of stuff under the ocean that you don't see that makes each piece work flawlessly.*

Daniel Olivas  
Network Analyst  
Austin ISD

## The Solution

RapidIdentity, the digital identity platform for education, emerged as the perfect solution for Austin ISD—configurable, cloud-based, and user-friendly. Leveraging a digital identity platform would enable Austin ISD to orient the district's educational technology ecosystem around digital identities— or the representations of students, educators, and staff in the community. In doing so, Austin ISD would be able to grant individuals access to needed applications and connect data from those applications back to the correct digital identity. Ultimately, the digital identity platform would simplify workflows and provide the security needed for Austin ISD to focus on accelerating learning.

Daniel Olivas, Network Analyst at Austin ISD sees RapidIdentity as the new perimeter of Austin ISD's digital environment, tying together the district's infrastructure and synchronizing its data, so users can access classroom tools from any WiFi network. "RapidIdentity is like an iceberg," explains Olivas. "There's a bunch of stuff under the ocean that you don't see that makes each piece work flawlessly. When a student walks into the classroom or is doing homework, they're able to access all their courses and homework needs seamlessly through the portal."

Austin ISD selected the following from RapidIdentity Cloud's suite of solutions:

- **RapidIdentity Lifecycle** to automate the full identity lifecycle of all users including students, teachers, staff, parents, subs, contractors, and consultants district-wide.
- **RapidIdentity Authentication** to deliver seamless, one-click user access to applications via single sign-on (SSO) for staff, while protecting all entry points with multi-factor authentication (MFA) methods that simplify authentication for students and teachers.
- **RapidIdentity Governance** to manage district identity and access control policies and ensure consistent, district-wide enforcement using policy-driven configurations that wouldn't require changes to Austin ISD's existing processes.

RapidIdentity provided Austin ISD with a COTS solution configured to meet their needs, as opposed to the district developing its own framework with systems so customized that they would eventually become insupportable. Moreover, by working with a vendor, rather than developing a solution themselves, Austin ISD can help other districts, too.

When they encounter a problem other districts might experience, Austin ISD works with RapidIdentity to make the code standard and accessible to everyone. "If there's something that, we deem is very important to us, then why wouldn't it be useful to every K-12 district in the country?" Hurley asks. "We would rather go to them and say, 'Hey, I have this idea for a feature. Let's develop it together and make the code standard.'"

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## The Results

RapidIdentity has helped Austin ISD create a digital ecosystem that students and teachers can access from anywhere. As part of Austin ISD's broader vision, RapidIdentity has unlocked the following benefits:

### User-Friendly Login

RapidIdentity's "better together" approach has enabled Austin ISD to supplement capability gaps without needing to change or replace existing classroom management tools. For example, while students and teachers continue to use ClassLink to synchronize access to their classroom resources, district staff now have an equally streamlined login experience, thanks to RapidIdentity Authentication's SSO capabilities. With both solutions in place, the district reaps best-in-class security, as well as a stellar classroom experience.

RapidIdentity Authentication also provides Austin ISD with flexible MFA that can be tailored to the unique needs of different user populations. For Kindergartners and special education students in particular, the ability to authenticate using a QR code combined with Pictograph authentication has made EdTech tools more accessible, while still adhering to security best practices.

### Reduced Learning Loss

As long as a student has their Chromebook and WiFi access, they can engage in personalized learning from any location—fulfilling the motto "AISD anywhere." RapidIdentity has also empowered teachers with self-service capabilities to manage student access. Instead of waiting in a queue for half an hour until the IT team can assist, teachers now reset passwords right from the classroom, expediting learning.

### Enhanced Security

In keeping with the district's cloud-first COTS strategy, RapidIdentity has helped Austin ISD bolster security and become a leader in K-12 authentication and zero trust. While traditional, perimeter-focused security simply considers all users within the network to be trustworthy, zero trust is an identity-centric security model that considers all network traffic unsafe until an identity has been verified—a critical approach for securing a digital ecosystem that can be accessed from anywhere. Now, RapidIdentity acts as a new perimeter for Austin ISD, putting robust identity management at the core of the district's security program.







### Less Downtime

As RapidIdentity is hosted in the cloud rather than on premise, managing operations, security, and incident response is offloaded to Identity Automation, instead of bogging down the district IT team. Having a cloud-hosted solution also means Austin ISD no longer has to worry about system downtime during emergency weather conditions. During the 2021 Texas power crisis, the district's system shut down when their generators ran out of gas—but Amazon Web Services (AWS), one of their public cloud providers, kept running, reinforcing the benefits of a cloud-first approach.

By adding RapidIdentity to the list of cloud-based, COTS solutions at the district, Hurley and his team have freed up bandwidth previously spent on maintenance and security monitoring. "It's a multiplier," Hurley says. "My team doesn't have to carry pagers anymore. We're not going to be on call."

Austin ISD is only getting started with realizing their digital strategy. In the future, Hurley hopes to give students 5G-enabled Chromebooks to remove even more learning barriers. Hurley and his team are excited to find new ways to make the district's technology more effective and efficient—anticipating a blend of hosted data centers, private cloud, and public cloud offerings—and continue to innovate with their sights turned toward the future. RapidIdentity's digital identity platform provides Austin ISD the foundation to support their evolving technology strategy as the district continues to upgrade their learning environment and future-proof it for exciting new possibilities.

"If you're looking at the future of technology, what does a K-12 technology department do? I think the answer is: provide an environment for our users through standard-based tools," adds Hurley. "I want to have technology that's the rocket fuel for student outcomes."



**IDENTITY  
AUTOMATION**

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