IDENTITY AUTOMATION

OWENSBORO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

RapidIdentity

- Lifecycle
- Authentication

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>
> Nathan Seaton,
> Instructional Technology Specialist
> Owensboro Public Schools

Owensboro Public Schools, based in Kentucky's fourth largest city, serves approximately 5,000 students and 400 staff members that call its namesake city home. Recognized as a National Top 25 District of Innovation, Owensboro is a trailblazer within Kentucky's public school system, leading the way as an early adopter of cutting-edge technologies and teaching methods.

The Challenge

Before any district can blaze a trail with technology innovation, there must be a foundation in place to support and future-proof an upgraded learning environment. However, back in 2013, Owensboro's identity and access management (IAM) processes were entirely manual. Months would often pass before the IT team was informed that a faculty member lacked access to a certain system or had left the district. Any time a student needed a password reset or account unlocked, class screeched to a standstill, while the Help Desk was called.

Knowing automation was needed, Nathan Seaton, the district's Instructional Technology Specialist, and Matt Henry, Student Information Systems Manager, laid the first bricks of their IAM foundation: custom scripts to automate pieces of the process. Starting with automated CSV uploads, they quickly moved on to scripts that synced Owensboro's HR system (Munis) with their student information system (Infinite Campus), and then, that was synced with Active Directory (AD). From there, other downstream systems were configured, including Google Workspace, Clever, Microsoft Azure, and many more.

It was at that point Seaton and Henry set out to consolidate their combination of custom scripts and vendor solutions by building a single homegrown system. "We realized we had ad-hoc systems in place and wanted to build something more cohesive that would sync our individual pieces of this puzzle," recalls Seaton.

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After months of dedicated work, Seaton and Henry were struck with the immensity of maintaining their homegrown solution. "My role was project management, and Matt was focused on development, but that was our entire team for this project," says Seaton. "The homegrown solution just wasn't sustainable because as we tried to roll out new features, we were also trying to keep old features updated, fix bugs, and more. It's unrealistic for a school district to manage that all by themselves."

In addition to security concerns, limited support and the time required to maintain the homegrown solution, Seaton recognized that because the knowledge remained with himself and Henry, Owensboro would be left in a difficult position if either of them ever left the district.

Knowing the vision of automated IAM was possible, but too much to sustain on their own, Owensboro set out to find an enterprise-grade IAM solution that was supportable, scalable, and easily replicable across other districts in the state.

The Solution

The more Owensboro searched for a commercial off-the-shelf solution, the more their frustration grew: finding a solution that rivaled the flexibility of their homegrown system, but also aligned with their budget seemed impossible.

State requirements further complicated matters. In Kentucky, all school districts are connected to a single AD network, meaning any solution has to sync with the network and be approved by the state. The new solution also had to integrate with both on-premises and Azure AD; as well as Google Workspace, Clever, Infinite Campus, and Munis.

Additionally, while Clever was an effective classroom management tool that provided single sign-on (SSO) for students, the district's goal was to have a solution that would encompass all their business processes. "There were plenty of times when we pushed the scope beyond Clever's capabilities," says Seaton.

Owensboro was an early-adopter of Clever, and over the years, Seaton had established a relationship with the company's leadership team. "One day, I sent one of the co-founders a message, essentially pitching Clever to develop identity management capabilities, particularly with staff," explains Seaton.

To Seaton's surprise, he received a reply to keep an eye on the news. Coincidentally, Clever would announce an exciting new development in the IAM space the next day: a partnership with Identity Automation.

Upon visiting Identity Automation's website, Seaton was immediately struck by the homepage headline:

The Digital Identity Platform for Education. "That really resonated with me," he reflects. "We weren't one of eight different sectors they're trying to grab, so I had a great initial feeling."

Meeting the Identity Automation team for a demo of RapidIdentity confirmed Seaton's hunch. In fact, the digital identity platform checked all Owensboro's boxes.

With all signs pointing to yes, Owensboro decided to move forward, implementing RapidIdentity Lifecycle to manage the full lifecycle of all the district's digital identities and empower users with self-service capabilities, including password resets. Owensboro also implemented RapidIdentity Authentication for streamlined SSO that covered the portions of their ecosystem that Clever didn't address.

Additionally, the district has plans to roll out RapidIdentity Rostering, which will allow them to customize student data that's provided to third-party vendors, as well as house other software applications directly within RapidIdentity.

The Results

With RapidIdentity, the Owensboro team found a solution that matched the original vision for automated IAM, but without the weight of handling everything themselves. Since implementing RapidIdentity Lifecycle and Authentication, the Owensboro team has achieved:

Greater Flexibility

RapidIdentity gives Owensboro the flexibility to sync all their Cloud resources while securely communicating within their network for on-premise systems, including AD and Munis. Seaton and Henry appreciate the flexibility of RapidIdentity's configurable features. For example, students' names can easily be changed in RapidIdentity, and an alert can even be sent ahead of time when there's going to be an update. "With other systems, you get what you get. But with RapidIdentity, we were able to configure these things," says Seaton.

State Compliance

Due to the state's unique AD infrastructure, Owensboro lacks full control over their AD network and cannot install to their actor or domain controller. While this was a key barrier to entry for most solutions, RapidIdentity works seamlessly with the Kentucky Department of Education's regulations. The system even enables the district to apply the state's AD password requirements across all accounts.

Zero Day Access

Onboarding is now a streamlined process at Owensboro. HR can now onboard faculty members without IT assistance, granting new users zero-day access to their accounts and setting up their building access control badge. They've also cut onboarding time for new staff and students down from months to two hours for the majority of services.

Reduced IT Burden

RapidIdentity has helped the IT team shift responsibilities off their plate including maintenance. "Software updates happen behind the scenes without us having to worry about them. It's all

seamless and takes care of itself," says Seaton. Moreover, faculty are empowered by Lifecycle's delegated administration and self-service capabilities to reset student passwords on their own, cutting down on Help Desk calls and classroom disruptions. Teachers have more insight into student accounts in general, including usernames, emails, and whether the accounts are enabled or disabled.

Seaton and Henry also appreciate having a dedicated point-of-contact they can go to with questions. "I like that I know our Customer Success Manager and that they take a proactive, transparent approach," says Seaton. "The Identity Automation team is extremely knowledgeable, responsive, and helpful. This is definitely one of the best support experiences I've ever had," adds Henry.

RapidIdentity has freed the Owensboro IT team from the responsibility and stress of managing an entire system on their own. "There are support teams for us and for the district," says Seaton, adding: "At first, we thought RapidIdentity was too good to be true, but here we are a year later. It really was exactly what we needed."

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