Case Study

Sumner-Bonney Lake School District
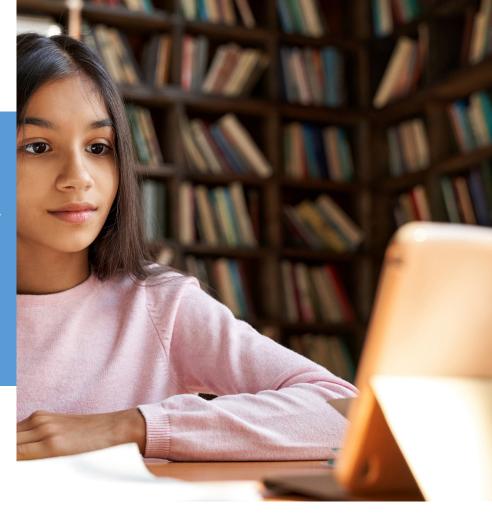
RapidIdentity

- Lifecycle
- Authentication
- Governance
- Rostering

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>
> Luke Knowles
> Supervisor of System Architecture and Development
> Sumner-Bonney Lake School District

Sumner-Bonney Lake School District spans across the cities of Sumner and Bonney Lake, Washington. The district supports 1,075 employees and a steadily climbing student body of 10,000 through its identity access management (IAM) system management (IAM) system.

The Challenge

From his beginnings as a student intern of Sumner-Bonney Lake's IT department, to now being the district's Supervisor of System Architecture and Development, Luke Knowles has seen Sumner-Bonney Lake cycle through a number of different IAM solutions. As recently as 2020, the district used homegrown IAM infrastructure—built by an in-house developer over several years—consisting of PHP scripts and an internal data warehouse. The system required importing data daily from Skyward, the district's HR and student information system (SIS), and using a different password for every application.

"We had what felt like a million different logins for every possible application we have," Knowles recalls. As students and staff struggled to remember multiple sets of credentials, Knowles describes the help desk's effort to keep up with access assistance and password resets as a "never ending game".

"The whole system had inherent efficiency, security, scalability, and maintainability issues that became more evident after the developer left our district," says Knowles. "There weren't any standards, and that's not a suitable environment for a growing school district where things are changing all the time."

The Solution

In 2020, the district appointed a new Cybersecurity Engineer who decided to replace the homegrown solution. During the selection process, the IT team weighed each option's track record, pricing, whether the environment was fully hosted, as well as feedback from other districts.

After deliberating among three solutions, RapidIdentity emerged as the clear winner. To date, the district has implemented four RapidIdentity solutions: Identity Lifecycle Management, Authentication, Identity Governance, and Rostering. Together, the solutions enable the district to automate manual tasks and streamline a variety of district needs, including:

Identity Lifecycle Management to simplify account management for all district users with automatic provisioning and deprovisioning based on specific data received from Skyward, the district's SIS and HR system.

Authentication via Single Sign-On (SSO) for students and staff to securely access over 35 applications via the RapidIdentity Identity Provider (IdP), in addition to Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) mandated for all district leadership staff.

Identity Governance to ensure proper identity and access controls are maintained and updated & enable consistent established processes, such as elevating accounts to administrative privileges.

Rostering to automate the process of integrating and synchronizing student roster data with target applications, making transforming, filtering, and combining data easy.

The Results

With RapidIdentity, Sumner-Bonney Lake benefits from enhanced security practices and is enabled to automate and streamline a variety of manual tasks. "My experience with RapidIdentity has been a game changer," Knowles states. "The platform provides us with all the fundamental building blocks we need for reliable account lifecycle management, application rostering, and system integration solutions for our district."

THE DISTRICT NOW ENJOYS:

Automated Provisioning and Deprovisioning:
When an employee leaves the district, the HR team updates the last date of employment in Skyward and RapidIdentity automatically disables their accounts across the district. The same process occurs when students graduate; their accounts are automatically disabled and properly archived.

Simplified Password Management:
In addition to deploying single sign-on (SSO), Sumner-Bonney Lake has created a more secure password policy through RapidIdentity. Students in grades 6-12 are now required to claim their account by setting their own passwords, while younger students have the option of using a QR code to login.

Enhanced Security Protocols for Staff:
The district has mandated MFA for all leadership, including principals and directors. Staff have the option of selecting their preferred authentication method as either SMS-based One Time Password (OTP), or U2F FIDO tokens. In the near future, they also plan to enforce two-factor authentication for staff when they log in from outside their district's network.

Better Security Practices:
Sumner-Bonney Lake is more careful in managing the IT department's access. In the past, certain IT staff members had domain and local access at all times, but now technicians must request privileges for local or domain admin accounts through RapidIdentity Governance.

Easy Rostering:
Sumner-Bonney Lake rosters several external applications, including Clever and their discipline management system SWIS, through RapidIdentity. For example, RapidIdentity automatically structures student and faculty records according to Clever's formatting specifications, and sends the data to Clever in CSV format. "RapidIdentity is very flexible and you can roster through CSV files over SFTP, or OneRoster APIs," Knowles says.

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Since gaining oversight of RapidIdentity, Knowles has regularly found new uses for it. "Everyone is happy to have a well-functioning solution in place," he says. "RapidIdentity has given us the ability to have consistent, established processes."

With RapidIdentity, Sumner-Bonney Lake has found a lasting, more secure, and more adaptable IAM solution. While many of Knowles' predecessors changed platforms, Knowles looks forward to sticking with RapidIdentity and using it to its full potential. He's always on the lookout for more opportunities to automate manual work and refine the district's security processes.

In the future, Knowles plans to add more self-service requests, empowering district users and freeing up the helpdesks' time. "That's what one of my goals is here, to identify unnecessary, repetitive tasks that we're constantly dealing with that can be handled automatically through RapidIdentity," Knowles explains.

IDENTITY AUTOMATION