



Illinois Association of School Administrators Creates Professional Learning Community Using OpenText Social Workplace

Established in 1946, the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) is the premier advocacy organization for school administrators in the state. To encourage better networking and communication between the superintendents, the IASA is using OpenText Social Workplace, a secure, collaborative environment that enhances the ability of superintendents to come together to communicate and share information through discussions and document sharing—anytime, anywhere.



IASA offers a variety of professional enhancement and resource services to its members. The association was using a Listserv mailing list, and while it offers participants the ability to exchange ideas and research, it does not offer an effective way to easily capture this knowledge base of ideas, opinions, experiences, and content for future reference.

“Somebody will initiate a discussion or state a problem, and then others will respond. However, the problem with the Listserv is usually the person who stated the problem then collects the documentation and sends it out to the group, but there’s nowhere to find that information. If a superintendent had the same problem six months later, it would be very difficult to remember who researched it,” states Dr. Richard Voltz, Associate Director, Illinois Association of School Administrators.

The IASA’s goal with Social Workplace was to combine the community-based aspects of Twitter and Facebook with the email communication that the Listserv provides and start a community of users that could come together in a secure, private environment. “A repository of documents will be available in the Social Workplace community spaces, based on the topic of interest. For example, a discussion that’s hot in education right now is bullying. Maybe somebody has a bullying policy or has dealt with a bullying issue. That becomes a community of information about bullying,” explains Voltz.

Social Workplace brings together all of the social tools that have defined the modern Internet into a safe, organizational framework. With Social Media, content is organized in specific communities by subject matter, enabling users to quickly focus on the information

that is most important to them and reducing the volume of emails sent among groups. Generated content such as discussions, ask/answer queries, documents, and so on are immediately accessible to a wide network of stakeholders.

“It’s a professional learning community. Our goal is to increase the effectiveness of public education in Illinois through increasing student achievement in public schools. Whatever we can do to enhance that collaboratively and cooperatively, we should be doing. Social Workplace is a great tool, and I look for great things to occur.”

Dr. Richard Voltz,
Associate Director, Illinois Association of School Administrators

When a superintendent logs in, they will see on their home screen any new communities or people they have recently added. If a superintendent has a particular topic they are interested in, they can do a search for information related to it. For example, by entering the phrase “professional development” in the search field, the entire system will be searched and the requestor is presented with not only content, but people and communities that have a connection with professional development.

The IASA is setting the standard for what can be achieved in public education by providing every superintendent in the State of Illinois with a secure social media tool to collaborate, work, and practice.

[Click here](#) for more information about OpenText Social Workplace.