

# WASHINGTON SCHOOL INFORMATION PROCESSING COOPERATIVE

CASE STUDY  
[www.progress.com](http://www.progress.com)



## MAKING THE GRADE WITH SKYWARD

For years students from a school district in Washington State continued to perform poorly on a state wide assessment test. The general assumption was that the teachers were failing their students. Parents, the legislature and the school board would continue to ask them: “Why aren’t you educating these students? Why can’t you get them to succeed?”

But there was another question no one ever thought to ask: “Are the students showing up to class?” Sure enough, poor attendance was the culprit, not disengaged or incompetent teachers, or students that were incapable of learning or succeeding. Because the students weren’t coming to class, they weren’t learning the material. By using an integrated business and student management system provided by the Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC), the district was finally able to pinpoint the root cause of the students’ poor performance and address the real issue by working closely with parents to reengage their children with the academic process.

Marty Daybell, CEO of WSIPC, says that is essentially his organization’s mission—to give the districts, schools and parents in his state the information and tools to guarantee students receive the best possible education. Student success was also the driving force over 40 years ago when ten Washington school districts formed a cooperative to empower schools by sharing software development and hardware costs and providing centralized technological support. Since then WSIPC has evolved into a unique public agency that provides quality information services at a reasonable cost to 278 school districts servicing 800,000 students in Washington’s K-12 community.

For almost a decade, WSIPC has used an integrated Student Management and School Business solution from Progress Application Partner Skyward. The organization collaborated with Skyward to completely restructure its computing infrastructure and replace its three separate outdated application offerings with one integrated software solution. WSIPC was able to leverage its 12 years of prior experience with Progress, working in concert with Skyward, to customize reporting, administration, retirement and accounting requirements specific to Washington State.

Today, WSIPC offers its members an integrated student and financial management application via a Software as a Service [SaaS] model. Teachers and administrators can now manage nearly all aspects of public school management using the Internet-based system, and parents are able to interact with teachers over the Web regarding their individual child’s progress.



### CHALLENGE

*Restructure its technology infrastructure and replace its three separate application offerings with one integrated software solution*

### SOLUTION

*An integrated student and financial management application developed by Skyward and delivered through a SaaS model*

### BENEFIT

*WSIPC’s customers benefit from an unparalleled system that streamlines operations, reduces costs, increases visibility and simplifies the reporting process.*

## INFORMATION PROVES VALUE AND TRIMS COSTS

Like any business in today's challenging economy, schools are doing everything they can to stretch their budgets and prove their value. With WSIPC's solution districts have the ability to both track student performance and tie that student performance back to their budget. "So now if the government gives a school or district money for a specific program, our customers can use the Progress and Skyward solution to demonstrate unequivocally how that program and that funding has impacted its students. This is the first time in the history of the nation that anyone has been able to do this," says Daybell.

With more access to information and visibility into operations, many districts are also significantly reducing their costs using the solution. One district used WSIPC's transportation module to completely revamp how it coordinates its buses, determines which kids go on particular buses, where the bus stops should be located, etc. As a result, it is saving \$77,000 a year—enough money to prevent the layoff of at least one teacher.

## COMMUNICATION AND EFFICIENCY GO HAND IN HAND

Change rarely comes easy, and Daybell says that is especially true for the education sector. But WSIPC has truly changed the way districts and schools communicate. Prior to using WSIPC's integrated offering, communication between administrative functions like payroll and human resources was rare for most districts. Implementing the Skyward and Progress system essentially demands communication across boundaries and departments. By broadening employees' perspectives about how and why they perform certain functions they often recognize areas where they can make improvements. The byproduct of this process is that business operations as a whole become far more efficient and streamlined.

## FOCUSING ON CORE COMPETENCY, NOT TECHNOLOGY

The way Daybell sees it, technology should be the man behind the curtain. One of the core functions of WSIPC is to provide schools and districts with state-of-the-art solutions to manage their operations while at the same time remove the burden when it comes to technology.

"In just one weekend we can have the solution deployed and fully functional across a district, and then we are responsible for all maintenance and updates. With traditional solutions the districts and schools have to worry about purchasing hardware, network capacity and maintenance, hiring and training savvy and skilled workers, managing updates, and a long and complicated implementation cycle. With WSIPC they can focus on what is most important—educating kids and running schools."

Just last year, Washington's legislature put together a bill that requires every district to provide the state with an enormous amount of data. For those districts using traditional solutions, panic has set in as they try to figure out how they are going to comply with the law.

WSIPC's customers have no concerns because WSIPC has already taken care of it for them. In fact, the state department of education held a briefing to the legislative education committee stating that the Skyward and Progress solution was the only solution that has so far fully complied with the data demands.



***"Our rapid business growth was the real test for the system. In the beginning we were just working with small districts, anywhere from 100-3000 kids. But soon we were serving much larger areas of the state with far more kids—upwards of 32,000. Today we are serving 94% of all of the K-12 districts in Washington."***

Marty Daybell  
CEO  
WSIPC

## MAKING PROGRESS WITH PROGRESS® OPENEDGE®

**Reliability makes for a lonely beeper.** True, Microsoft is practically in WSIPC’s backyard, but the organization has remained loyal to Progress for close to twenty years. “Progress has always satisfied our key requirements for reliability, scalability, high performance, ease of use, and low maintenance,” says Daybell. “We run 800,000 kids through this system; 65,000 educators and close to 2-3 million parents or guardians also use the system. And in the eight years that we have used Skyward, our Progress database has never gone down.”

For a company that delivers its solution through the SaaS model, reliability is paramount not only for its success, but the success of every single one of its customers. “Our Progress database is so reliable; I never have to worry about it. There is a beeper on my hip that is supposed to go off when there is a problem; thanks to Progress it is pretty lonely.”

**Scaling to support massive growth.** Scaling any system by over 95% would be daunting, even downright terrifying, to practically any organization; but that is just what WSIPC has managed to do successfully. “Our rapid business growth was the real test for the system,” says Daybell. “In the beginning we were just working with small districts, anywhere from 100-3000 kids. But soon we were serving much larger areas of the state with far more kids—upwards of 32,000. Today we are serving 94% of all of the K-12 districts in Washington State. Progress® OpenEdge® scaled effortlessly with this growth.”

Daybell also appreciates the ability to easily integrate the solution with third-party systems such as banks, School Messenger, school alert tools, and special education tools just to name a few. “The Skyward solution is broad in its offering, but by using Progress OpenEdge they also provide a system that easily integrates. Until you see it you can’t believe how fast other systems can be integrated with the Skyward and Progress system.”

**Progress versus Oracle; Saving versus Spending.** So what exactly does a million-dollar, yearly maintenance fee get you? Well, not much in Daybell’s opinion. “If you look at us versus other districts that use Oracle for their infrastructure, they are left with a million-dollar, ongoing licensing fee every year. I can’t understand why anyone would choose a solution that continues to drain money out of K-12. The largest amount of our budget shouldn’t have to go towards technology solutions. I honestly don’t even know what I pay for Progress, and that should tell you something because as the CEO I know what we pay for a lot of things. But whatever it is, it isn’t enough to raise an eyebrow on my end.”

Every district in the state of Washington is required to report its expenditures to the state. Based on the numbers from the state department of education, every single district that is using the WSIPC solution has spent considerably less on technology, literally hundreds of thousands, versus those who are not using the solution.

## FLEXIBLE TECHNOLOGY. FLEXIBLE PARTNERSHIP.

“An experiment.” That is what Daybell says a student can become when he moves from one school district to another. The student mobility rate in the state of Washington can be as high as 40%, and when those students move from school to school, the majority of their student data does not follow them. The teachers and administrators have no idea how the student will perform until he attends class and either succeeds or fails.

WSIPC joined forces with Skyward to find a way around this issue, and within six months Skyward had a prototype ready that would allow a school administrator to access a screen and pull up a student’s entire history. “Skyward could have said ‘Sorry, this isn’t a priority for us’, but that is the difference between a technology provider versus a true partner in K-12 solutions.”

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Marty Daybell

Imagine a student is sitting at home attending high school via computer. That is exactly the type of change Daybell predicts we will see in the future and something WSIPC's solution will have to support.

"As the traditional educational model changes, so too will our solution. With Progress we have the platform in place to sustain such change, and with Skyward we have a forward thinking partner who is highly adept at knowing the direction of the market. We are always adjusting our solution to better serve our students, and with Skyward and Progress by our side I am confident we will continue to deliver on our mission."

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## ABOUT SKYWARD



Since 1980, Skyward has been serving the K-12 Administrative software needs of school districts. Today, Skyward's School Management Systems™ are found in over 1,300 school districts throughout the United States and internationally. Skyward's School Management System represents an integrated student and financial management software system designed to keep administrators, educators, and families connected. For more information visit: [www.skyward.com](http://www.skyward.com).

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## PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global software company that simplifies the development, deployment and management of business applications on-premise or in the cloud, on any platform or device, to any data source, with enhanced performance, minimal IT complexity and low total cost of ownership.

## WORLDWIDE HEADQUARTERS

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