News, Notes, & Reminders

Your source for information, updates, and training related to HCC Fiscal Services

Planned Downtime Announced

As you may know, HCC's Alpha has been in service for decades and is home to USAS and USPS. Aside from the risks associated with using dated hardware, there are also costs associated with maintaining an old system. Because of these factors, HCC will be migrating everything housed on HCCA1, our physical Alpha server, to a "Virtual Alpha" environment beginning on Friday, April 29th and ending Monday, May 2nd. **During this time, all applications related to the Alpha including USAS, USPS, and ODE Reports will be unavailable. Employee Kiosk will also be affected. If you use Kiosk for your substitutes, you'll want to make plans for your staff to bypass this system during these dates.** In order for this to be a success, we'll need collaboration from you, our districts. We'll need you to plan accordingly and alert your district users that they will not have access to the system on the dates above.

Also, it's very important that you contact any third party vendors who are connecting to the alpha system (USAS/USPS) on behalf of your district and inform them that the Alpha will be down during the above time period. No data will be able to be pushed to or from the system during this migration.

Once the migration is complete, end users should not see any differences in the applications. If anything, performance and speed are expected to improve. **Downtime is expected to begin at 10:00 p.m. on April 29th and end at 5:00 a.m. on May 2nd.** HCC will also send out notice once this process is complete in case we finish early.

MCOECN ERP Project

State Software has many loyal users, based in no small part on the affordability and other advantages previously noted. At the same time, current unknowns with State Software "Redesign" may impact future adoption. Two issues commonly cited are:

- Not currently production-ready and no guarantee when it will achieve this status
- Districts' needs and desires for additional features

For many districts State Software "Redesign" remains a viable alternative with a low total cost of ownership (TCO) and a straightforward conversion path. Other districts express the desire for "more features, mature software, ready to go". Regardless of this choice one outcome is clear – districts will need to move to a new fiscal package.

What is an "ERP"?

Historically, State Software has proven to be a stable platform with limited "frills" that meets the basic needs of most districts. To complement the basics, many districts have licensed add-on products to extend the feature set. This approach is called "best of breed" when the market for a given function is large enough to allow choice among several possible alternatives – the district can select the product which best fits their local requirements.

Upcoming Dates

April 29th – Begin migration to Virtual Alpha
May 2nd – End migration to Virtual Alpha
May 7th – End of Initial Offering Period for SunGard

The extent to which these packages integrate with State Software – and the quality of those integrations – can vary significantly from one vendor to another. Other aspects, like the type and design of the user interface, hardware needed, or where the software is hosted create boundaries between applications. Still another type of boundary may occur if different departments or centers within the district acquire their own solutions. Collectively these logistical, technical, and political boundaries form operational silos built around different software and/or functions in the district.

The Enterprise Resource Planning "ERP" tool differs greatly from the "best of breed" or independent silo environment described above. An ERP system is created from close alignment of modules within one software package, each sharing a common user interface design, common database tool, common hardware platform, common security management, and common reporting tools. This tight integration creates a more efficient and effective software solution. An ERP package is typically comprised of a base functionality plus an extensive set of modules. Districts can choose which modules are needed to meet their operational requirements, with the potential for greater cost savings and operational efficiency than can be achieved by the best of breed approach.

Districts needing an expanded feature set expressed an interest in further exploration of ERP systems as an alternative to State Software.

After an extensive evaluation process the MCOECN and Member Information Technology Centers announce a partnership with SunGard K-12 to acquire eFinancePLUS Enterprise Resource Planning System for Ohio's K-12 schools.

Information was sent out to district Treasurers earlier this week detailing project details and pricing. Districts interested in being part of one of the initial implementation "waves" can reach out to David Downs.

For additional literature, videos, and information related to this ERP solution, go check out the Program Portal Webpage.

eFinancePlus Packages

How Can You Use OnBase?

OnBase, a Hyland Software solution, is a document management software hosted and supported by HCC that can significantly increase your district's efficiency by automating your financial and HR records.

With OnBase, you'll be able to route requisitions and/or invoices through a workflow for fast approval, purchase order creation and payment. Additionally, OnBase integrates with State Software to archive payroll documents and also integrates with banking software to archive cancelled checks.

To learn more about OnBase and how it can help you manage your financial and HR records, please reach out to Laura Gallogly for a demo.

State Software Redesign

SSDT is pleased to announce the first edition of a monthly newsletter focusing on the state software redesign. The goal of the newsletter is to keep you better informed of our transition from classic to the newly redesigned software, showcasing the various features and capabilities in order to allow you to better transition yourself and begin to feel more comfortable with the new system. You can go here to access the newsletter.

For those of you who have volunteered to test out the new software, we appreciate your efforts. In evaluating

the software, the most important question is "What incomplete or missing features would you require before using the applications as replacements for Classic USAS or USPS?" If you've begun testing using the demo sites provided to you by HCC staff, please feel free to post your suggestions, questions, and feedback via Cherwell. Demos have been taking place and others are scheduled. If you have additional questions or need more information on the state of this project, please don't hesitate to reach out to David Downs.

Tip of the Day

Did you know that EIS fixed assets tag numbers may be alpha-numeric? But, any containing alpha characters must be upper case!

Meet the Team

The team member in this edition of the newsletter likely needs no introduction to most of you. Terri Dobbs has been providing fiscal support to our member districts for about 10 years.

Terri has 28 years of school finance experience having worked at Milford Exempted Village, Indian Hill Exempted Village and now for HCC.

She has lived in Milford, OH for most of her life. She loves to do home improvement projects and yard work at her house and at her daughter's. Terri likes to point out that, while she doesn't have grandchildren to spoil at this time, she has no problem loving and spoiling her animals! Working with all of HCC's districts has been a really good and rewarding experience for Terri. HCC certainly appreciates the hard-work and expertise Terri brings to the table.