

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #329 (2000-2001)

June 25, 2001

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF NEW DISTRICT EMAIL SYSTEM

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and authorize the Superintendent to acquire the necessary hardware, software, and software licenses required for replacement of the Quarterdeck Mail system by upgrading the current Microsoft Exchange Mail system. The system upgrade costs are not to exceed \$200,000 previously encumbered for this project.

PERTINENT FACTS:

The District currently operates and supports two email systems for staff usage. These are Microsoft Exchange and Quarterdeck Mail. Microsoft Exchange supports both Windows and Macintosh clients, while Quarterdeck Mail supports only Macintosh clients. The District currently supports 5,500 users on the Quarterdeck Mail system and approximately 1,000 users on the Exchange system.

The District was notified about a year ago that the vendor of Quarterdeck Mail was eliminating any future development and support for this system. What this implied was that eventually the Quarterdeck Mail system would no longer function on future generations of the Macintosh operating system. The decision was made at that time to plan for the phasing out of the Quarterdeck Mail system.

Information Technology staff identified two potential replacement systems for the Quarterdeck Mail system. One viable candidate was the Microsoft Exchange system that we currently operate and support for 1,000 ASD users, the majority being users of Dell computers with a smaller number of Macintosh users. The

other was the First Class system. Both systems met criteria that were established for the Quarterdeck Mail replacement:

Must support both Macintosh and Windows (Dell) clients;

Must be a client/server system capable of supporting 6000 users or more;

Must have useful and popular features such as address books, special folders, and calendars;

Must be user friendly;

Must have stable vendor support;

Must be able to support a phased transition for Quarterdeck Mail users;

Must be cost effective.

Jane Berglund, Senior Systems Analyst, was appointed chairperson of an ad hoc committee to evaluate the two candidates. A group of 40 ASD staff was chosen to comprise the evaluation committee. The group included Totem staff, technical staff, teachers, and administrators. However, the time demands of the evaluation process required that volunteers be used rather than designees. Attachment A lists the composition of the ad hoc evaluation committee.

The evaluation took place from November 2000 through April 2001. The First Class system was measured initially with a test system established for evaluation purposes. The First Class evaluation was conducted from November 2000 through January 2001. The Microsoft Exchange system was then evaluated using a similar process. The Microsoft Exchange system evaluation took place from February 2001 through April 2001.

At the end of the evaluation period, committee members were asked to rate each system on a global evaluation scale with 1-100 points available for assignment to each system. Evaluators were asked to consider such factors as:

Ease of use;

User friendliness;

Functionality;

Reliability;

Hardware requirements;

Vendor support;

Training requirements.

The results of the evaluation overwhelmingly favored Microsoft Exchange as the replacement system for Quarterdeck Mail. The average score for Microsoft Exchange was 90.3 (out of 100 possible) compared to 51.3 (out of 100 possible) for First Class.

Based upon the results of the systematic evaluation of the two candidates, Microsoft Exchange is recommended as the email system to replace Quarterdeck Mail. Current Microsoft Exchange users would obviously remain as they are. The conversion of Quarterdeck Mail users would take place in a phased process over the 2001-2002 school year. Attachment B details the email system migration plan developed by the staff at Information Technology.

The Administration is very comfortable with this recommendation and believes it to be in the best interests of the District. Microsoft is a proven vendor and our experience with Microsoft Exchange has been very positive. Information Technology staff are strongly in favor of Microsoft Exchange because of the ability to interface our web development projects to the Exchange mail system. The selection of Microsoft Exchange will mean that the District has only one core email system to support. This will result in a significant decrease in the support requirements.

The cost for acquiring the necessary hardware and software components to replace Quarterdeck Mail with Microsoft Exchange is estimated to be \$175,690. The cost of First Class as a replacement system is estimated to be \$215,300. These cost figures were developed by Information Technology staff. It should be noted that the hardware costs for both alternatives are the same and that the difference in estimated costs of the two systems is in the cost for software licenses. Attachment C shows the detailed breakdown of the cost components.

CC/PM/NH

Attachments

Prepared by: Norman Holthouse, Executive Director, Technology/MIS

Approved by: Pat McDowell, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

