

FIRSTCLASS®

A Region-wide Solution, A Single Server

"FirstClass provided Grande Yellowhead Regional District with a single server solution for communicating, collaborating, and learning online – a solution that lowers technical support as opposed to supporting more than 30 distributed servers across 340 kilometers."

Organization: Grande Yellowhead Regional Division (GYRD)

Industry: Education

Application: Region-wide communications and collaboration solution with future growth into distance education with video-conferencing

Results

- End-user satisfaction and quick adoption of FirstClass by an employee base with a seven year history of using a legacy product
- Ease of use through the divisional implementation of the Explorer view in the FirstClass client
- End-to-end migration in two working days
- Product features and scalability to provide asynchronous distance education tools
- Proprietary client that is secure from internet email virus attacks
- Lower total cost of ownership in capital, bandwidth, and operating support
- Self-supporting system using internal support, intelligent tools, and no external contacts
- Unlimited access to the FirstClass client for home use
- Web access via web client for remote access through corporate firewall

About Grande Yellowhead Regional Division

Grande Yellowhead Regional Division consists of over 8000 users across four distinct groups including the public and catholic school boards, community learning societies and library association that serves Jasper, Grande Cache, Hinton, Edson, Robb, Peers, Fulham, Niton, Wildwood, and Evansburg in Alberta, Canada.

When choosing a web-based email solution, the school district conducted an extensive review of ten collaboration products including Groupwise and Microsoft Exchange. GYRD chose FirstClass to replace their proprietary system, running on Windows 2000 servers. One major requirement that was filled with FirstClass was the ability to support all students and staff from four mail domains on a single server. FirstClass offers the power and flexibility to do this.

The Communications Challenge

A key future requirement of GYRD is to provide distance education and collaboration amongst all of the high schools in their region. The functionality that they required included the ability to track timetables and share school, teacher, and student calendars, both individual and group. GYRD chose FirstClass for several key reasons, including:

- The ability to host multiple (unlimited) Internet mail domains
- Collaborative calendars
- Track timetables
- Security and confidentiality



Education Services Centre - First Class Inservice

The FirstClass Solution

FirstClass was originally designed for use in educational environments, and provides a powerful set of functionality for multi-media enriched communication, collaboration, and remote access. Despite the power of FirstClass, GYRD required simplicity and ease of use, such as single-server sign on for all students and staff, across four different mail domains.

Due to the great simplicity of FirstClass setup and administration, GYRD was able to offer a system-wide cut over in two days. Says John Percevault, Director of Technology and Communications, "...this was probably a record in terms of time to cut over to another email system – we were also able to install the FirstClass Client on 2,200 personal computers prior to the cut over, in preparation".

At GYRD, FirstClass is used in many ways across multiple media to manage meetings, share school council schedules, enable teachers to collaborate with subject specialists, coordinate curriculum across multiple schools, and provide the ability to develop cooperative projects among elementary classrooms and the community.

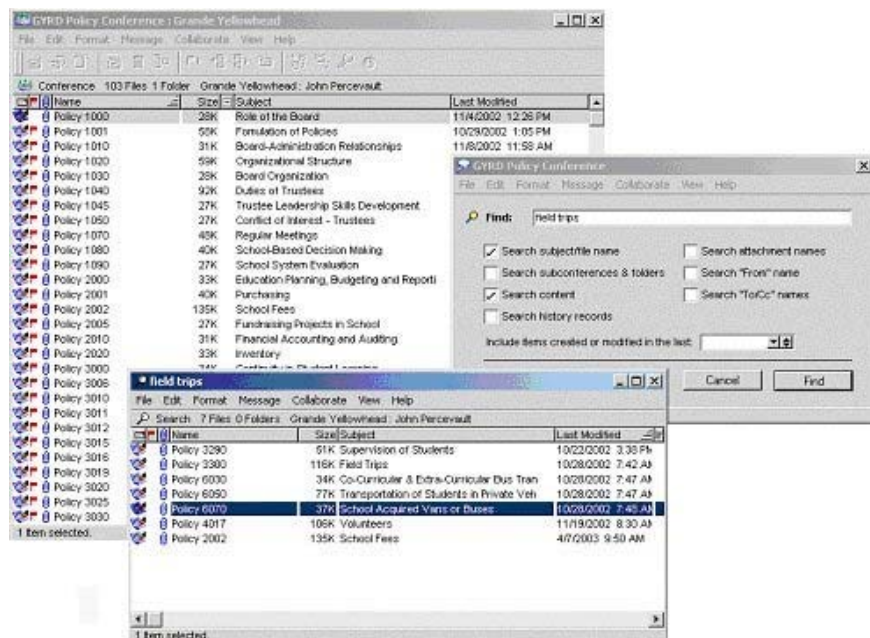
An example of information sharing across the region is the GYRD Policy conference. Staff members and principals can quickly and easily search the shared conference for policy information. For example, they can perform a search for "field trip" to find policies and procedures that deal with various types of field trips for the region.

Other conferences are available for teachers and students, using the freely distributable FirstClass client, or a standard web client.

So what is the future of FirstClass at GYRD? "A long term Grande Yellowhead strategy" states John Percevault, "is to maintain our single-server network

strategy, yet expand on our distance education support through FirstClass. GYRD will integrate FirstClass as the asynchronous tool to support our synchronous delivery of high school courses on the videoconference network for 2003/2004.

Regarding the future, Mr. Percevault states that, "In the context of planning for the future, FirstClass is a perfect fit for a school system on Alberta's pending SuperNet".



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