

PowerSchool's Cloud Rescues Indianapolis Public Schools

HOW CLOUD-BASED HOSTING HELPED THIS DISTRICT RECOVER FROM A RANSOMWARE ATTACK IN ONLY TWO HOURS



As the largest public school district in Indiana, with 5,000 staff serving 30,000 students in 77 schools, Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) simply can't afford the systems its students and staff rely on to become cybersecurity liabilities. When a ransomware attack compromised its applications in the spring of 2020, IPS turned to PowerSchool's cloud-based hosting for disaster recovery.

By using PowerSchool's backup server to deliver a functioning emergency cloud-hosted server, IPS had all its applications restored and functioning normally within two hours after the attack was identified. Pleased with the outcome, IPS ultimately moved all its systems to PowerSchool's cloud, eliminating the need for on-premises hosting and enjoying newfound security, scalability, and cost-effectiveness.



30,000
Students



77
Schools



5,000
Staff

A PowerSchool-Driven District

Before the security event in 2020, IPS was already using many PowerSchool products, including [PowerSchool SIS](#), [PowerSchool Employee Records](#), [PowerSchool Applicant Tracking](#), [PowerSchool Enrollment](#), [PowerSchool Schoology Learning](#), and [PowerSchool PowerPack](#).

AT A GLANCE

Challenges

- Ransomware attack compromised their systems in spring 2020
- Needed to restore server functionality ASAP
- Needed a long-term solution to increase network security and reduce risk

Solution

- [PowerSchool Cloud-Based Hosting](#)

Results

- Using PowerSchool's backup cloud-hosted server, IPS's applications were restored and functioning normally two hours after the ransomware attack was identified
- Minimal impact on students and staff
- Permanent shift of all IPS's applications from on-premises hosting to PowerSchool's cloud-based hosting
- Decrease in costs and staff workload

David Brunsting, Director of Student Information Systems at IPS, says that the technology staff in the district liked the ease with which they could access and export data from PowerSchool software, alleviating time spent manually manipulating spreadsheets to deliver requested reports. Brunsting elaborates, "Getting the data right in PowerSchool and not having to manipulate it in a spreadsheet helped us a lot."

Brunsting was committed to helping the district's staff fully learn PowerSchool's software and its capabilities so they could utilize all the tools available to them. However, IPS continued to rely on on-premises hosting for its server.

Spring 2020 Ransomware Attack

As a safeguard to ensure the smooth daily operations of IPS systems, Brunsting had programmed a bot to "ping" the IPS server every five minutes and report back on the network's status. One Sunday morning in the spring of 2020, the bot reported back that the systems were down.

At the time, PowerSchool ran the district's server, though the server itself was self-hosted on-premises. As soon as IPS staff discovered that their server drives had been wiped clean by a cybersecurity breach, they called PowerSchool Support. "Literally within 2 hours, we were up in an emergency cloud-hosted server based on the Saturday morning data pull," Brunsting says. "Schoology never went down because [it] was already in the Cloud."

Without PowerSchool's EMS server, it would have taken far longer to figure out there was a data breach—more than a day, Brunsting estimates. IPS used PowerSchool's backup server for a month as it navigated the effects of the cyberattack and determined ways to make their server more secure.

Recovery and Reconfiguring Their Edtech Ecosystem

Though PowerSchool's backup server was meant to serve as a temporary solution for IPS, "We made the decision pretty quickly that we weren't returning everything back to the [on-premises] server," says Brunsting. Instead, IPS decided to end its on-premises hosting and permanently shift to [PowerSchool Cloud-Based Hosting](#). "It was pretty flawless," Brunsting adds.

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DAVID BRUNSTING

Director of Student Information Systems
Indianapolis Public Schools, IN





to describe the process of moving IPS's applications to PowerSchool's cloud. "There were times when it was faster than what we were running. After switching, we never really looked back."

The risk reduction and increased data security are additional benefits, as well. "The level of scrutiny we're under now is heavy," Brunsting says. With daily data backup and full disaster recovery, PowerSchool's cloud-based hosting helps safeguard schools and districts against any unplanned event. Additional peace of mind comes from its 24/7/365 monitoring and 99.9% uptime and reliability delivered through Microsoft Azure, the largest and most certified cloud infrastructure in the world.

Pleased with the partnership, IPS added more PowerSchool platforms to their technology: [PowerSchool Attendance Intervention](#), [PowerSchool Analytics & Insights](#), [PowerSchool Performance Matters](#), and [PowerSchool Ecollect Forms](#).

Time and Cost Savings

Though IPS never determined the source of the ransomware attack, the security breach resulted in substantial time and cost expenses. "They did an estimate, and between lost time and everything else, it was in the millions," says Brunsting. He elaborates, "On the PowerSchool side, it didn't cost us any extra. [But] there was a good chunk of people that all they did for the next few months was recover data."

Happy as a Cloud

While IPS would love to leave the spring of 2020 in the past, the district carries forward the lessons learned from the security breach. With an easy and efficient transition from on-premises to cloud hosting, IPS reduced risk, increased data security, and scaled its operations to meet the needs of every district member. The district is "happy as a cloud" with their decision to choose PowerSchool Cloud Hosting.

Reduce risk, increase data security, and decrease total cost of ownership by moving to PowerSchool Cloud Hosting.

Visit www.PowerSchool.com or call 1-877-873-1550 to learn more.