



How North Thurston Public Schools Strengthened Identity Management and Security with NIM

When North Thurston Public Schools migrated from Skyward SMS to Skyward Qmlativ, it used the opportunity to modernize its approach to identity management. The district selected Tools4ever's NexGen Identity Management (NIM) solution to bring staff and student identity processes together, improve security, and provide a more efficient approach for managing users across its technology environment.

Challenges Before NIM

Before implementing NIM, the district used Tools4ever IAM and SSRPM to manage staff Active Directory accounts, while student account creation relied on a collection of PowerShell scripts that had become difficult to maintain. These scripts offered little reporting, did not adequately account for students who left the district, and lacked regular account auditing. As the district's technology environment evolved, this fragmented approach made it increasingly difficult to manage staff and student identities, troubleshoot account issues, and maintain a centralized view of identity data and activity. Most importantly, inactive or unmonitored student accounts represented a potential security risk that needed to be addressed.

Evaluation and Selection of NIM

With the move to Skyward Qmlativ underway, the district reevaluated its identity management environment. Having already used Tools4ever IAM and SSRPM and experienced strong support from the Tools4ever team, the district wanted to continue with a Tools4ever solution. After consideration, NIM proved to be the best fit for its requirements, allowing the district to move beyond simply replacing its existing staff identity management system and bring both staff and student identities together on a single platform. Given its established relationship with Tools4ever and confidence in the solution, the district did not feel the need to evaluate other vendors.

Key Product Highlights

NIM Apps allows the district to extend selected identity management functions to other employees without providing administrative access to the NIM platform. Helpdesk and end-user support staff can access relevant account and HR information to better troubleshoot account-related issues. This gives them the visibility they need while maintaining appropriate administrative boundaries.

Client

North Thurston Public Schools

Challenge

Fragmented staff and student identity processes created inefficiencies, limited visibility, and security risks.

Solution

NIM centralized identity management and automated user lifecycle processes across the district's systems.

Products and Connectors

- Active Directory
- Microsoft Entra ID
- Exchange
- Google
- Destiny Library Manager
- Skyward Qmlativ

Result

Greater efficiency, improved visibility, and stronger security throughout the user lifecycle.



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Sr. Systems Administrator, North Thurston Public Schools

The district has also used NIM Apps to empower teachers and designated building staff to assist with student password resets. This capability enabled the district to eliminate a third-party application previously used for that purpose, reducing the number of platforms its IT team needed to maintain and support.

NIM's audit logs have provided another important benefit. Actions performed by the system can be traced when questions or issues arise, giving IT staff greater visibility into what happened to an account and when it happened.

Integration and Adaptability

NIM now connects the district's identity processes across Active Directory, Microsoft Entra ID, Exchange, Google, Destiny Library Manager, and Skyward Qmlativ. Bringing these systems together gives the district what it describes as a “single pane of glass” for identity management. Rather than managing Microsoft identities, Google accounts, library access, and other identity information through disconnected processes, the district can manage them as part of a streamlined identity lifecycle.

NIM has also proven adaptable as operational requirements change. Adjustments such as adding an extension field in Active Directory or changing which users are exported to the library system can typically be completed quickly. Many changes can be handled internally, while more complex requirements can be addressed through Tools4ever support.

A District-Wide Domain Change

One of the clearest demonstrations of NIM's flexibility came when the district changed its domain name. Working with the Tools4ever support team, the district developed a solution that allowed the change to be carefully tested with specific users before being implemented across the organization. This provided an opportunity to validate the process and resolve potential issues before making the change at scale. Once testing was complete, the district was able to apply the domain change across the organization using the established process. What could have been a complex identity management project became a controlled and repeatable transition.

Enhanced Efficiency and Productivity

NIM has improved efficiency by automating and delegating processes that previously relied on scripts or direct IT involvement. Identity data is also presented in ways that are useful to administrators and support personnel,

reducing manual effort and allowing IT staff to focus on higher-priority responsibilities. Overall, reduced manual effort and more efficient account management have produced meaningful operational benefits across the district.

Security Enhancement and Compliance

Moving student identities from loosely maintained PowerShell scripts into NIM addressed what the district considered a significant security weakness. Accounts can remain inactive until the appropriate onboarding process is complete and can be disabled or removed promptly when users leave, reducing the risk of unused or unmonitored accounts becoming potential attack vectors. NIM also dynamically manages group membership based on position and enrollment data, allowing access to be adjusted as users join, transition within, or leave the district. Override capabilities provide additional control when immediate action is required, such as administrative leave or other sensitive staff or student circumstances.

Although identity management represents only one component of the district's overall cybersecurity strategy, reliable identity lifecycle management helps ensure that access reflects each user's current relationship with the organization.

Consultancy and Support

The district describes both its NIM implementation and its ongoing support experience as exceptionally positive. The implementation consultant worked closely with the district to build a solution tailored to its specific environment rather than applying a generic configuration. Just as importantly, the implementation included the knowledge transfer necessary for district administrators to confidently manage and adjust NIM after the project was complete. That implementation has continued to serve the district well as its environment has evolved. When additional assistance is required, Tools4ever support helps the district make adjustments and address new requirements.

The district also values having access to responsive, knowledgeable support specialists. According to the district, support requests are addressed quickly by professional technicians who understand both the product and the technical requirements behind each request.

Future Outlook and Endorsement

As cybersecurity becomes an increasing priority for K-12 organizations, the district expects identity management to remain a fundamental part of its security strategy. NIM provides a reliable foundation that can continue to support the district as its technology environment, security requirements, and identity management needs evolve.

The district strongly recommends NIM to organizations facing similar challenges. As the district summarized:

“Our jobs get to be challenging and full enough as it is. The movement of people in an organization our size is impossible to keep up with without an identity management platform. With Tools4ever, I have found a partner that backs a great product with a stellar support team. They have my loyalty and profound appreciation.”

Conclusion

By moving both staff and student identities into NIM, North Thurston Public Schools transformed a fragmented identity environment into a centralized and more secure approach to user lifecycle management. The district has replaced poorly maintained student provisioning scripts, improved visibility into account activity, automated access based on authoritative identity data, delegated appropriate tasks through NIM Apps, and connected identity processes across multiple systems.

NIM has given the district greater flexibility as its technology environment continues to evolve. From routine account management to a district-wide domain migration, NIM provides the automation, visibility, and control needed to support the district's evolving identity management and cybersecurity needs.

