

EDU User Stories

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INTRODUCTION

Your school district's technology environment must serve numerous and varied user types grappling with decidedly different daily dilemmas and demands. Most educational organizations believe meeting all of these needs and remaining within budget requires serious tradeoffs – often with one or more user groups' needs unmet. However, Identity Management (IDM) solutions provide any district with the foundation to maximize, track, and secure their educational efforts.

IDM solutions ensure your organization's identity information for each individual contains all the associated permissions, security, organizational, and “tribal” knowledge. By implementing verifiable identities, automated processes, access governance, and self-service and delegation modules, an IDM solution suite constructs an organization's controlling framework.

IDM solutions are dynamic, leveraging technologies comprised of a range of organizationally driven technical implementations that manage, integrate, and synthesize user identities, account lifecycles, user permissions, and activities to enable organizations with respect to facilitating rapid access to necessary resources as well as assisting critical security and compliance needs.

IDM solutions manage the who, what, where, when, why, and how as they relate to users operating across any organization's “increasingly heterogeneous technological environments” (Gartner). The implementation of this platform allows verified users to access necessary resources, IT professionals to focus on productive work instead of menial management tasks, and the school organization as a whole to operate more efficiently. IDM gives an organization the ability to shift energy towards education-enriching, ROI-focused, and beneficial operations rather than being restrained by its own systems.

The User Stories presented within this document are intended to provide the reader with understanding of different individuals' needs throughout a school district and how implementing a results-driven IDM solution benefits all of them.

USER STORIES

ELEMENTARY STUDENT (5TH GRADER)



“As a 5th Grader, I wish logging in was easier so that I do not feel left behind when I have trouble. Sometimes I forget or lose the password the school set for me. If I cannot log in at school, the teacher has to notify the IT staff to help me. I do my best to follow along with the rest of the class, but until I can log in, the instructions and assignments are difficult to understand. I feel like I am stuck playing catch-up and it is embarrassing. If too many students cannot log in, they can become distracting and disrupt the whole class’ lesson.”

SOLUTIONS:

One of the biggest challenges to successfully incorporating EdTech into lower grades is classroom facilitation and maintaining order amidst the chaos of children. This struggle becomes particularly evident right at the beginning of a class. Whether on 1:1 devices or in a computer lab, 15 to 30 easily distracted and excitable kids have a tendency to lose focus.

Your students most likely require some credentials for accessing the curriculum's education resources. For every student that forgets their credentials, the teacher has to help them while taking their eye off the rest of the class or leave the child behind in the lesson until the helpdesk is able to reset their password. Choosing to help the locked out students results in wrangling the kids' attention all over again. Leaving the matter to a helpdesk already juggling tasks leaves the child to play catch-up with the whole class. The more the teacher is distracted, the more the lesson suffers. This situation exacerbates when considering specific circumstances such as English Language Learners (ELL students) or special needs.

A Single Sign-On (SSO) solution providing students with seamless access to all of their EdTech resources offers the most comprehensive method of addressing student login issues. The students provide their credentials at a single login portal and, using protocols such as SAML and OAuth, retain federated access to the resources connected to the SSO solution's centralized dashboard. For districts supporting 1:1 device initiatives, SSO solutions may integrate with Chromebooks to require only a single login for access. For lower grades, the login process may be simplified to scanning QR Codes printed onto students' individual badges, avoiding the need to remember credentials altogether.

A Password Reset Solution or Delegated Password Reset App would solve the student login issues on a more ad hoc basis. Self-service password resets allow all users to reset their passwords at any time using verified responses to challenge questions and without requiring helpdesk assistance. For students, access to this functionality could be configured for different grade levels. A Delegated Password Reset App privileges certain users with the ability to reset passwords according to specified groups (e.g. a teacher may have access to resetting their class' passwords, but no others).

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER



“As a High School Teacher, I want to incorporate different EdTech apps and learning platforms into my lesson plans so that I can make my classroom as engaging and vibrant as possible. However, I simply do not have the time to manage all those resources properly if the data requires manual upkeep.”

“Tracking class rosters, grades, and more information for all of my students takes too long to accomplish completely. Further, if students forget their passwords during class, helping them means delaying the lesson and taking my eyes off everyone else. Our district bought some exciting EdTech platforms I have been itching to use, but they remain underutilized because of just how difficult they are to manage manually.”

SOLUTIONS:

High school teachers are tasked with juggling how the increased sophistication required of their lessons meets the varied learning landscapes of EdTech. To facilitate vibrant classroom environments, many teachers adopt technology for greater engagement or a different perspective from which to view the material. However, the burden can quickly become too severe when tasked with manually managing all of the class data for these EdTech resources. It adds up when you have to constantly switch between apps and systems to record the class rosters, grades, and other relevant information for all of a teacher’s students.

When manual management prevents effective classroom adoption, teachers are not able to capitalize on all of the amazing technologies that can bring their dream lesson plans to life. Resources with difficult upkeep go underutilized while still drawing upon the school district's budget – preventing future EdTech efforts. Some school districts resort to generic accounts to cut out the management pains, but lose all user accountability and auditing in doing so.

Another management pain surfaces when teachers incorporate folder systems requiring different accesses for their classes. Folders can facilitate providing files and information for new projects, submitting assignments, or group work. Already complex, the group permissions may need to accommodate varieties of access – such as for students to submit and edit their own assignments while not being able to see their classmates'.

A OneRoster Certified SSO solution would immediately improve instructors' ability to upkeep their classes' data within their EdTech platforms. As previously stated, the SSO solutions would provide students and teachers with an easily accessed, centralized dashboard with all of their EdTech resources. Utilizing OneRoster's open standard, the SSO solution and all downstream apps and platforms transfer and read the same, complete roster data. EdTech APIs help facilitate exporting grade data, saving teachers hours of manual recording. A SSO solution supporting both OneRoster and management tools for instructors should accelerate EdTech adoption throughout the district.

Self-service and Data Management capabilities for privileged users in the SSO solution allow teachers to expand their lesson plans and assignments further. Self-service minimizes painfully slow administrative processes, allowing users to request apps, groups, shares, and more. Configurable per resource, requests may be automatically approved with simple email notifications or routed directly to the resource owner. The resource owner approves or denies with the click of a button based upon the organizational structures and compliance efforts.

IT STAFF



“As a member of the IT staff, I wish I could automate or delegate many of the basic helpdesk tasks and the burden of managing all of the district’s user accounts so that I could focus on projects that deliver wider reaching, beneficial impacts. Late summer is the worst. Manually updating the student, teacher, and staff accounts for the coming school year bogs our whole team down for months of manual entry.”

“We check every user to ensure proper provisioning according to departments, class rosters, grade levels, student needs, and many more criteria. All of our other projects are put on hold and that backlog piles up fast. During the school year, ad hoc provisioning for new students or hires, resource access requests, and the nonstop password reset tickets keep us from knocking out targets that would improve everyone’s experience.”

SOLUTIONS:

The most traditionally demanding task facing a school district’s IT department has been manually managing the user account lifecycle – creation to yearly overhauls to deactivation. These data upkeep efforts can be so consuming that the whole staff may spend months updating all the accounts, deprioritizing other tasks during this time. Beyond this annually expected, increased workload, the IT staff remains responsible for any ad hoc user account efforts; providing insight, auditing, and organizational intelligence; addressing service outages; and day-to-day efforts like password resets.

When not in the grip of provisioning's massive time sink, those small, day-to-day efforts rapidly pile up and prevent personnel from accomplishing the impactful projects. Your IT staff ends up resetting passwords for the majority of their day instead of knocking out benchmarks that benefit the whole school district – such as network migrations and assisting with the backend of EdTech products.

Access requests to apps, folders, and shares add to this day-to-day workload when students, teachers, and staff submit them to the IT department. IT is mostly removed from the daily execution of these operations and hierarchies – as opposed to the requester's direct superior – and is often missing some organizational context for granting approval. If the IT staff cannot properly and compliantly facilitate or deny these requests, your environment's permissions and privilege are quickly polluted.

Automating the User Account Lifecycle with an Identity and Access Management (IAM) solution is the most comprehensive answer to district provisioning problems. Using a central repository, the solution is able to maintain an absolute record of each identity's user accounts, their specified organizational roles (Access Governance Role Modeling), and the associated permissions. The solution executes any provisioning updates according to new additions or changes to user data in this central repository. Delegation and Workflow Management apps typically provide additional flexibility within the IAM solution. Accounts remain properly provisioned as long as this central repository is maintained, and your IT staff can say “so long” to the waves of heated summer keyboard strokes.

IT staff reclaims significant time with the other organizational solutions listed herein as well. Self-service password resets can decrease related helpdesk tickets up to 80%. SSO solutions with Self-service and Data Management capabilities allow users seamless access and for resource requests to route to their owners, side-stepping IT altogether while remaining compliant to district policy.

CURRICULUM DIRECTOR



“As a Curriculum Director, I wish I had greater insights regarding our EdTech usage to determine which successfully adopted resources are improving classroom engagement. I want to help our instructors by providing them with the best tools possible. Some EdTech implementations remain from my predecessor’s time and I cannot determine their effectiveness. I have worked within the available budget to add curriculum elements that I believe in and are backed by vendors’ supporting data.”

“However, if our EdTech goes underutilized, we are wasting valuable room in the school budget. I know some teachers incorporate EdTech, but without the usage data, it becomes much harder to determine the value of the curriculum we are building with our instructors.”

SOLUTIONS:

As the school district’s “learning architect”, the Curriculum Director bears responsibility for determining what resources contribute towards fostering student achievement and instructional excellence. This aim requires a delicate balancing act between school district budgets, existing plans and implementations, and local, state, and federal regulations.

When it comes to evaluating EdTech platforms, collecting qualitative and quantitative data demonstrating value and impact remains particularly difficult. Further, this information must be presentable to varying parties – e.g. school boards, administrators and regulators, student parents and guardians. How do you measure successful adoption and usage, let alone true engagement and benefit?

Centralizing EdTech within a SSO dashboard provides Curriculum Directors with the monitoring capabilities necessary for examining the district's resources. Easy to interpret metrics including logins help paint more accurate portrayals of who (students or teachers) is using what resource. Integrating these usage statistics with traditional metrics demonstrating academic achievement (or slipping) over time, such as yearly or quarterly class grading, helps construct supportive statements regarding the specific impact a given resources makes.

Trackable metrics within SSO solutions include logins, unique application launches, and session times. This activity information should include dates/times, internal/external access, and more specifications. Combining different data allows a Curriculum Director to build and examine statistics such as out-of-school logins to the SSO dashboard occurring in the afternoon and evening with session length to help determine the average student's nightly homework. Similarly, an instructor's usage of a specific EdTech resource can be determined by the number of unique application opens during school hours (e.g. 30 opens for every "Biology 102" class). Easily relayed and referred to, these hard numbers introduce deeper causal or correlative insights regarding different resources' value.

CONSULTATION

Tools4ever intends for the information provided in this white paper to be educational and agnostic of any one IDM solution. Tools4ever's IDM solution suite provides all of the capabilities stated herein. A comprehensive technology plan can act as an organizational lever, allowing more accomplishment with less. If that premise is true, then Identity Management is the fulcrum with which that multiplication achieves the greatest benefit.

To learn more about results-based IDM solutions within Education and the varying capabilities, integrations and insight they offer organizations of all types, please contact Tools4ever. With nearly 20 years and more than 10 million managed user accounts of experience helping K12 Districts and Higher Ed Institutions transform their information resources into organization-driving solutions, Tools4ever understands that navigating through IDM solutions and implementations is a complex process, to say the least. Given the right knowledge and preparation, understanding IDM projects becomes much less daunting.

CONTACT TOOLS4EVER

If you would like more information on the subject of IDM solutions or to set up a consultative discussion with Tools4ever regarding steps to improve your organization's maturity, please contact our New York team at nainfo@tools4ever.com or our Seattle team at nwsales@tools4ever.com.

For more reading on Tools4ever's IDM solutions and consultative expertise, please visit tools4ever.com/resources/ or tools4ever.com/references/.

Tools4ever's complete range of IDM solutions includes:

1. Identity and Access Manager (IAM)
2. HelloID (Cloud-Based IDaaS & SSO)
3. Self-Service Reset Password Manager (SSRPM)
4. Enterprise Resource Authorization Manager (ERAM)



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