

Consolidated High School District 230 Secures Hybrid Schooling with Virtru

Why CHSD230 Chose Virtru

For this Chicago-area high school district, protecting student privacy is critical. With students attending virtual classes throughout the pandemic — and the district handling a higher volume of health-related information digitally — CHSD230 uses Virtru to encrypt and safeguard students' personal data.

The Result:

With Virtru, CHSD230 is able to:

- **Meet FERPA, SOPPA, and Illinois School Student Records Act compliance** for the creation, storage, and sharing of student records, which often contain protected health information (PHI) and personally identifiable information (PII).
- **Add a layer of security to its digital-first file management process**, after moving its many paper-based processes to the cloud.
- **Share individualized education plans (IEPs) with parents**, ensuring students' medical and educational information remains protected.
- **Safely manage COVID-19-related health data** and communications on behalf of students, faculty, and district administrators.
- **Quickly deploy and scale up usage across departments**, from HR to administrators, special-education teachers, and school nurses.

Securing Digital Communications Across Departments

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, CHSD230 conducted an assessment of its data across the organization. John Connolly, CTO for CHSD230, knew he wanted to move the district's paper-based files to a virtual environment for greater efficiency and time savings, so he and his team evaluated the data flows that existed, and how best to transition them to a digital environment.

Because email is the district's primary digital communication channel, Connolly wanted to put protections in place so teams could securely share sensitive information. He started with the business services department, which often handled faculty, staff, and student paperwork. "We set up Virtru so they could protect their sensitive information, and from there, it just started snowballing," Connolly said. "HR heard about it, and because they share other types of sensitive information with candidates, faculty, and staff, we expanded our licenses to HR.

D230

"The way we manage our data directly impacts the future success of our students. It's so important to make sure that data is protected."

-John Connolly, CTO
for CHSD230

As we started doing that, we realized we needed to provide Virtru to our Special Education leads so they could share IEPs with parents.”

“I think we started with six licenses, then went to 10, then 30, then 75. And now 100,” Connolly said. “So we’re not across the board for everyone yet. And I say ‘yet’ because I feel like it’s coming, but that’s kind of our progression where we expand based on the need.”

Bringing Peace of Mind to a Hybrid School Environment

When the pandemic hit, CHSD230 had a strong foundation because it had already moved so many of its processes to digital. The district has conducted hybrid schooling in a variety of configurations, which have evolved with virus transmission rates — starting with one or two in-person days a week, to some students being fully remote, to some being on-site every day. At the time of writing, school was taking place on-site for all students, but the district remains flexible as things continue to change. “It is a challenge,” Connolly said, “with the virus variants spiking, and contact tracing, and vaccination — and keeping track of all that as it evolves.”

The onset of the pandemic required CHSD230 to share more protected health information (PHI) than it ever had before. With Virtru in place, they can relay that information quickly and securely, knowing it can be easily accessed by external recipients without Virtru. “With the pandemic, nurses have been more digital in their interactions with families,” Connolly said. “Our admin teams across the board, also need to send sensitive information, whether it’s tied to the vaccine or contact tracing.”

In a complex environment created by the pandemic, IT teams are busier than ever, and Virtru gives them

peace of mind. “The ability to pull back an email is a really cool feature, because there are scenarios where that happens,” Connolly said. “I probably hear once a year about a school district where an IEP accidentally gets sent to a lot of people it wasn’t supposed to go to. I can sleep better at night knowing that, if someone accidentally sent an email to the wrong person, and Virtru protection was enabled, we could just revoke access. Thankfully, this hasn’t happened to us, but I like that it gives us control if that situation were to arise.”

Protecting Students’ Future Success

For Connolly and his team, protecting student data is core to their mission, and it has a lasting impact on students and their ability to succeed when they graduate. Connolly also serves as the president of Illinois Educational Technology Leaders, an organization dedicated to advancing technology and data protection for Illinois public school systems. “A main responsibility of any school district is to make sure that our students are successful and protected,” Connolly said. “The way we manage our data directly impacts the future success of our students, so that is a huge responsibility that I take on for our district. It’s so important to make sure that data is protected.”

About CHSD230

Consolidated High School District 230, located in the Chicago metropolitan area, is dedicated to innovation, empathy, and leadership. A digitally focused district, it takes a progressive approach to technology, empowering high school students with the skills and tools they need to succeed after graduation.



Need to safeguard your organization’s private data?
Start the conversation at virtru.com/contact-us