

CASE STUDY

Ventura Unified School District



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Ted Malos,
Director of Technology,
Ventura Unified School District

ORGANIZATION

Ventura Unified School District

INDUSTRY

K-12 Education

IT ENVIRONMENT

Providing file storage for 29 remote locations and D2D backup for primary storage at headquarters

CHALLENGE

- Manage single points of failure at remote sites
- Simplify storage management
- Improve scalability and reduce costs

SOLUTION

- Gridstore 16-node, 16TB supporting 5,000 users across 29 remote sites
- Symantec Backup Exec for Tier 1 backup

BENEFITS

- Unlimited scalability
- Improved reliability
- Reduced complexity
- Lower TCO

Ventura Unified School District Unifies Distributed Computing Environment for Cost-Efficient Business Continuity with Gridstore

CUSTOMER OVERVIEW:

The Ventura Unified School District was established in March, 1965. Today, the district has grown to encompass approximately 165 square miles, including the City of Ventura, Calif. and the surrounding area, stretching along the central California coast from the Santa Clara River to the Santa Barbara County line. For the students of its 29 elementary, middle and high schools and continuing education facilities, Ventura Unified School District works to realize its vision of safe, healthy, and high-performing schools providing an exemplary and balanced education fostering a lifelong passion for learning and engagement.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

The Ventura Unified School District was housing their Tier I and Tier II data from its 29 schools on over 100 servers maintained across the district in distributed locations. The District had over 20TB of data that had to be supported, managed and protected for multiple departments. From administrative support, bilingual education, child development, child nutrition and curriculum to educational services, facilities management, finance, health services, purchasing, student records, transportation and more, the district's technology department is responsible for maintaining business continuity for the district staff it supports. Yet, its distributed data model had grown costly and difficult to manage.

“Our goal is to be proactive and work with best of breed solutions,” said Ted Malos, director of technology, Ventura Unified School District. “But we also needed to unify our distributed environment for comprehensive data protection and business continuity while reducing cost and removing the additional burden off of our strained IT resources.”

Ventura wanted to reduce the infrastructure complexity of its distributed architecture and lessen risk. A citywide dark fiber optic Institutional Network (iNET) was completed in 2004 permitting Ventura to connect schools to the data center at 1 Gb. In 2006, Ventura acquired the former Kinko's world headquarters for their headquarters, the Education Service Center. This facility provided the opportunity to distribute technology assets between two data centers in separate buildings. Ventura was motivated to lessen risk by capitalizing on the assets in the centralized data centers for data protection and management ease.

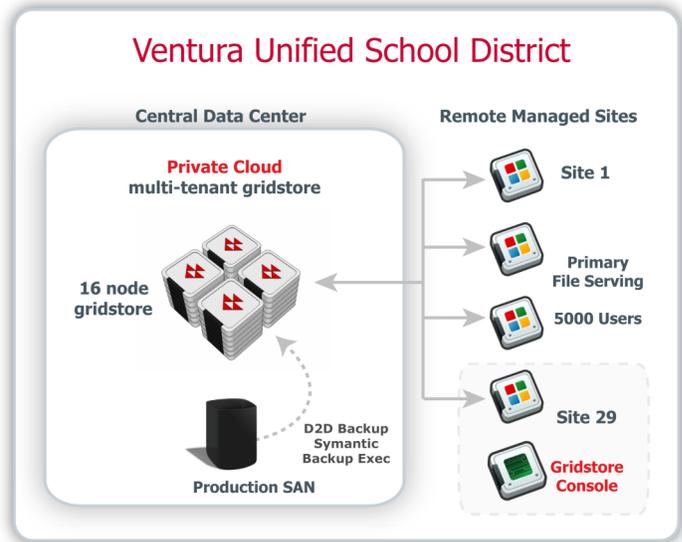


SOLUTION:

Once the school district started to embark on its data center centralization project, it began looking at a SAN to solve its issues. But, it was clear that a SAN solution for both its primary and secondary data would not economically provide an answer for all data storage requirements.

“We installed a SAN for our primary data and started looking at NAS as another option to manage our growing multitude of files,” said Malos. “We wanted a comprehensive NAS solution that provided all the functionality for end-to-end management but with the enterprise scale-out features we needed as we continue to grow. We also needed to reduce our power consumption and are always looking to cut infrastructure and management costs.”

After evaluating multiple options, the Ventura Unified School District selected the Gridstore solution. It combined the simplicity, convenience and affordability of NAS with the scalability, performance and reliability of enterprise-class storage. As a result, the school district can achieve a powerful NAS storage grid that eliminates storage sprawl and multiple single points of failure while benefiting from a next-generation storage offering at 1/3 the cost of standalone NAS solutions.



RESULTS:

The Gridstore Scale-out NAS solution is enabling the Ventura Unified School District to eliminate the risk, cost and complexity of its previous distributed storage infrastructure. The school district now aggregates the processing power of client systems and performs complex parallel storage processes on existing NAS resources, saving costs and maximizing existing resources without added management hassle. Key features of the Gridstore NASg solution that were specifically important to Ventura Unified School District include:

- **Unlimited Storage Capacity** – Gridstore virtualizes any number of the school district’s existing NAS or Gridstore storage nodes into a single pool of storage. This eliminates the cost and risk of storage sprawl while optimizing existing NAS resources and allowing capacity to grow incrementally using low cost Gridstore storage nodes like building blocks.
- **Unlimited Processing Capacity** – Gridstore uniquely harnesses the processing power across a grid of Ventura Unified School District’s client machines to eliminate server-based processing bottlenecks. As more district clients are added to the Gridstore, more parallel processing power is also added to the grid so processing constraints are never experienced.
- **Unlimited Reliability** – By harnessing the parallel processing and IO of a grid, Gridstore stripes data across many storage nodes so that there is no single point of failure assuring operational continuity for district users. Any pre-configured number of storage nodes can fail without data loss or downtime. The district technology staff can simply replace failed storage nodes with another low cost Gridstore storage node by attaching one to the network.

“Gridstore fit nicely for our requirements,” said Malos. “No one else had the ease of deployment, management and grid functionality in a single solution.”



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