CASE STUDY

MCES Reduces Cost of Lost Assistive Educational Devices by Using ASAP Systems' Asset Tracking Solution

Case Study Overview

COMPANY:

Matagorda County Educational Services

http://www.bcblackcats.net/

INDUSTRY:

Education

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

Find a system that can automate the inventory record-keeping process and let them know exactly what asset was given to each teacher/student and when.

SOLUTION:

Passport Asset Tracking

Mobile Barcode Scanner

BENEFITS:

• Easy asset check in/out function with assigned due dates

• Create unlimited reports on user-defined criteria

• Automated inventory transaction record-keeping

• Ability to search for specific assets in a centralized inventory database

• Mobile barcode scanning capabilities for physical inventory

MATAGORDA COUNTY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

"An opportunity for every child"

Matagorda County Educational Services (MCES) provides a continuum of child-centered and supportive services for non-traditional learners in collaboration with families and schools. In an effort to empower students to reach their full potential, MCES maintains and issues an inventory of assistive technology such as iPads, laptops, and communication devices, as well as physical therapy, furniture, and special needs equipment.

Following the use of a paper-and-pen system for a number of years, MCES decided it was time to advance their inventory and asset management processes. The organization wanted to eliminate manual methods of asset tracking and record keeping that contributed to the loss of roughly 7% of total assets over the years. It became apparent to MCES that they needed to implement a comprehensive inventory system to help make inventory and asset management easy and efficient.

THE CHALLENGE

MCES centered inventory efforts on providing specialized equipment to individual students with special needs, but were doing so ineffectually. For the current school term, the organization has over 10,000 items spread out among nineteen schools within five school districts. Regrettably, the ledgers they had previously used to log inventory transactions were not getting the job done. They contained incorrect entries due

to human errors and the lack of an organized system. Therefore, the staff was wasting time searching through inaccurate and outdated inventory records.

"We wanted a system that could help us track the real-time location and cost of equipment and how long they were kept within the district," said Amanda Anderson, Autism Specialist at MCES.
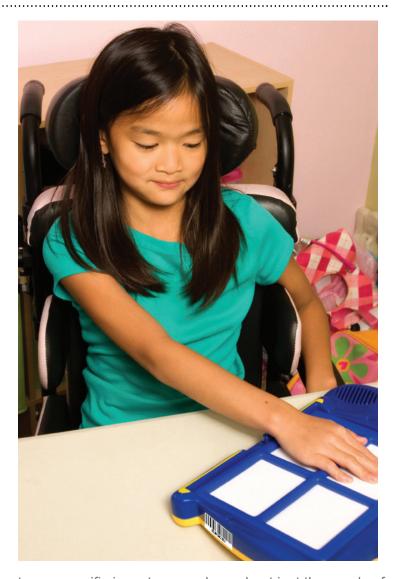
The challenge for MCES was basically two-fold: find a system that could automate the inventory recordkeeping process while increasing traceability through functions that let them know exactly what item was given to each teacher/student and when. Anderson's research showed that the most effective inventory systems for documenting inventory activity were barcode-based. This type of system would provide the barcode scanning capabilities that would eliminate the daunting task of manually logging every received and issued asset.

With the organization's aforementioned concern over traceability, an inventory system would not be complete without an in-depth reporting tool. "We had been misplacing materials for years and it was time to establish some accountability, especially since many of the items were purchased with federal and local government funds," stated Anderson. She wanted the value and physical movement of assets to be tracked over time for each school and district. These details were important to the school superintendents because of possible audits looking into the allocation of government grants they received.

FITTING THEIR NEEDS

The organization needed access to real-time inventory information stored in a consolidated database so they could search for, find and distribute assets as quickly as possible. Furthermore, teachers' immediate and continuous need for specific equipment, dictated that MCES find a system with an effective check in, check out functionality. For example, throughout the week popular special needs equipment can be requested at three different schools. Hence, the cooperative wanted to associate each checked-out item with a person or location as well as an assigned return date to maintain control and oversight.

"We expected the system to work like a library system, but not be an out-of-the-box library software. We wanted complete control with the ability to configure the system

to our specific inventory needs, and not just the needs of a school library or librarian," says Anderson.

THE SOLUTION

After participating in a one-on-one online demonstration with an ASAP Systems engineer, MCES decided to move forward with ASAP Systems' recommended asset tracking solution, Passport. ASAP Systems addressed the organization's main challenges by giving them the ability to track all assistive technology and school equipment using barcode labels and a mobile barcode scanner. With the support of ASAP Systems, the organization quickly set up the modules in Passport they wanted to use and recreated their entire inventory process to incorporate suggested best practices moving forward. Soon, tracking and accounting for every

school's assets became an automated and habitual process for the users within the cooperative.

"We would definitely recommend this system to others in our industry. We can now input items into the system as they come in daily and get the items out to the teachers and school districts by the next day," answered Anderson, when asked about how she felt about Passport and what it allowed her to accomplish.

Configurable Data Fields

One aspect of implementing the system simply involved importing the data from their existing inventory lists and mapping it within the Passport database. Anderson and her team could choose each data category (i.e. asset type, cost, quantity) and edit field names so that only the information they wanted to see would be included, and so the terminology made sense to them. This intuitive functionality made navigating and filtering through their inventory data very straightforward.

Check Out/In with Due Date Notification

Following the importing of every asset into the Passport database, MCES tagged each item with a barcode and gave it an asset number. When a teacher requested an iPad or special needs device, Anderson could simply scan the item (check it out) and assign it to a location, such as the teacher's school or classroom. Additionally, the organization could assign a due date to the asset and automatically send a notification to the teacher via email or SMS text when the date approached. MCES received the library-type functionality they desired and noticed a substantial decrease in the number of missing equipment within the first two months of use.

Reporting

Immediately, the reporting feature allowed the cooperative to track every asset imported into the database. When asked about the feature, Anderson said, "We love how easy reporting is. We set up the reports to display the total asset cost at each district and school." The cooperative plans to generate reports at the end of each school term and share them with the District Superintendent and school principals to provide insight into how the assistive technology budget fared.

Ultimately, ASAP Systems gave Matargorda County Educational Service the tools to automatically track and easily manage the educational resources they loan to numerous teachers in the county. The special needs students in the county schools are now able to receive the devices they need in a timely manner, while the organization will save thousands of dollars due to a decrease in lost or damaged assets and increase in accountability.

For more information on inventory and asset tracking systems for educational services, visit our website or contact

sales@asapsystems.com

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