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## Sitecore Case Study:



# North Vancouver School District – Connecting schools with the community

## Summary

A Sitecore customer since 2004, the North Vancouver School District is managing 40 school sites as well as over one hundred staff sites—and that number continues to grow. With a consistent and professional design, the sites are easy for staff and teachers to maintain, and even Mac users have the ability to add and manage content. As a result, families, students, and teachers within the community are now more involved and engaged.

## Challenge

The North Vancouver School District (NVSD) is made of up of approximately 17,000 students, 40 schools, and 2,300 full- and part-time employees. With web sites and online communication becoming an increasingly popular method of communication for schools and the community, the NVSD wanted to be sure they were providing a professional, consistent, informative, and up-to-date site. The school district has had a web presence for a long time, with content management progressing from Frontpage, to a homegrown CMS that was developed using Microsoft Active Server Pages. During the initial phase, all of the district online communication went through Brian Fairholm, the web developer.

Some of the issues the school district faced with the previous way of managing content:

- NVSD is too large of an organization with too much information for one person to manage everything. They wanted to be able to empower the teachers and staff to manage content as well.
- The technology of the homegrown CMS was older, so they needed to decide if they should rewrite and update the homegrown CMS, or move to a third party solution

- The school district has several hundred users on Macintosh computers – including most of the elementary schools
- They needed to update the overall look and feel of the web site

## Solution

NVSD decided to go with a third party solution, and they felt that a .NET solution would best fit their needs.

Says Fairholm, “We looked at an open source solution that was attractive because it was free and the integration seemed easy, but we felt that the product was immature and also, we were concerned that if we ran into a support issue, we’d be on our own. We also evaluated another commercial .NET solution, but we had a lot of technical questions—and we felt that they were answered in a superficial way. We also had trouble getting through to support.”

*continued on reverse*

## North Vancouver School District Site



## Sitecore Case Study:



*“Sitecore worked with us and exposed the CMS’s functionality — which allowed us to integrate it with other technologies. To us, Sitecore has been more than just a CMS, but a development platform. We are thrilled with the depth and sophistication of the Sitecore environment.”*

**—Brian Fairholm,  
Web Developer,  
North Vancouver  
School District**

They ultimately chose Sitecore’s CMS, and Fairholm says they like that the Sitecore team was very open with them. “Sitecore worked with us and exposed the CMS’s functionality -- which allowed us to integrate it with other technologies. To us, Sitecore has been more than just a CMS, but a development platform.”

NVSD integrated Sitecore with their backend, including a user management application that integrated all students and staff from their sources. Says Fairholm, “The staff comes out of our HR system – and we’re able to pull all of that information through Sitecore into our home-grown user management application. At the same time, the students come through Sitecore from a different system. This enables NVSD to create and manage users and then feed their information directly into the Sitecore CMS.”

A new developer, Val Petrosyants, was contracted to extend Sitecore into new points of integration. Because of Sitecore’s open architecture, NVSD was able to easily develop custom applications that would seamlessly work in conjunction with the Sitecore CMS. One example of this is a newsletter application that links directly to the Sitecore Mailing List Module. The newsletter application pulls news highlights from a selected school site and then puts those highlights into an email that can then be edited and sent to the mailing list. The news highlights can also be formatted into a .PDF document that can be emailed, linked to, or printed out for parents without web access. School and District News items are also pulled into a Flash display application that can add transitions and motion on the site’s front page as well as made available via an RSS feed. All of this enables the schools to repurpose their communication efforts.

“In addition,” says Fairholm, “the district now enables Mac users to participate fully as content creators, by using Firefox along with Sitecore.”

### Result

Today, with Sitecore in place, the NVSD has the main district site, with a site for each school as well. The district and school sites all have a consistent look, and offer the same features such as navigation, breadcrumbs, and sitemaps. With over 140 sites now running on Sitecore, Fairholm expects this number of sites to double as they continue to train more staff on how to create and manage their own content.

Families, students, and community members now have access to information including calendars, the school policy booklet, school planning, newsletters, department info, and links to staff sites. In addition, staff members and teachers can create their own individual sites independent of their main school site. The individual teacher sites provide communication with parents regarding activities in the classrooms, such as field trip pictures, examples of student work, and even homework assignments. In some cases, students are encouraged to create content and the teachers can then publish it to the site.

For Fairholm, now he’s able to focus his time on development rather than being a content provider. “We are thrilled with the depth and sophistication of the Sitecore environment.”

### Technology Description

Solution Special Ingredients:

Custom developed Newsletter Application

Custom developed Reporting Application

Custom developed User Management Application to create users accounts and staff sites



Sitecore’s Web Content Management System (CMS) and portal software solutions enable companies to deliver compelling web experiences. Sitecore’s award-winning CMS software makes it easy for businesses to create and keep up-to-date dynamic, full featured Web sites of all types. Sitecore’s industry leading flexibility and scalability allows companies to better leverage their content to improve customer experience and drive business growth.

Thousands of public and private organizations, including national governments and Fortune 500 companies utilize Sitecore solutions for their Web sites. These organizations have created and now manage over 5,000 dynamic Web sites with Sitecore including Microsoft, Sara Lee, Siemens, Toshiba, Omni Hotels, Computer Associates, WebTrends and Atlanta Falcons. Sitecore has offices and representatives in more than 50 countries around the world.

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