



School Services Centre takes pressure off children with trusted electronic signatures



“When we send a document home in a child’s backpack, we never know what state it will be returned in or if it will come back signed in time. In some cases, it ends up penalizing students.”

In the northern part of Lac St-Jean’s 1,040 square kilometres, the Pays-des-Bleuets School Services Centre (CSSPB) serves approximately 8,000 students in more than 36 educational institutions and three administrative centres.

Its impact on the region’s economy and culture is enormous, especially given that the centre employs about 1,500 of the region’s 55,000 residents.

“Two schools could be located up to 150 kilometres apart. And since we cover such a large territory, efficiency at work is our motto.”

Sonia Rousseau, an analyst in the IT resources department, plays a major role in ensuring that student services and administrative services are efficient. Whether teachers or school transport companies, all sorts of occupations are influenced by their digital integrations.

She agreed to share how she and her colleagues at the CSSPB are helping to improve student services and shape the region’s digital future.

Digital acceleration: student success a top priority

"It's important for me to that students have ideal learning conditions. Education is important to me."

Sonia admits that the tools she deployed with the IT team over the years have had a cumulative impact on the quality of teaching.

"All our students have been assigned equipment and they can bring it home. Digital technology improves the quality of their education."

When it comes to sharing her secret recipe for facilitating change management, she insists that "We must communicate the objectives, needs, challenges, benefits and proposed solutions from start to finish."

She gives the example of their adoption of electronic signatures that employees began to get exposed to following the identification of multiple issues.

Like many other organizations, the CSSPB had identified cumbersome administrative tasks, internal-external

communication challenges, and approval delays that impacted services.

And one of these issues concerned students.

"When I worked as an office assistant in schools, I saw young people who were responsible for getting their parents to sign a document and who were unable to get it signed. I could see the distress in their eyes. It is a stress that we do not need to put on children."

Seeing that some of the students were at the centre of administrative processes when there was no reason for them to be there, Sonia and her team began to evaluate electronic signature tools.

Reliable documents: choosing the right solution

Security and legal reliability were paramount for the CSSPB. The electronic signature solution could not put the organization at risk from a legal point of view and had to prevent confidential data from getting leaked. In addition, the solution had to be hosted in Canada.



***Our mission is to serve students
and we live in a digital society.***

***It is critical for our institutions
to teach best technological
practices.***



After reviewing ConsignO Cloud®'s encryption mechanisms and certifications, Sonia admits that the team "didn't take long" before making their choice.

But what definitely made the difference is how easy the platform is to use and the excellent customer service they received for its deployment.

"I don't know how many times I bothered your account manager to help me give a presentation! Usually, with ConsignO Cloud, if I don't reach someone within half an hour, I get a personalized callback."

Today, the platform has become essential when contacting hard-to-reach parents. So much so that intervention plans that would never get signed are now signed in less than 48 hours in 80% of cases.

"It's not complicated. You click on the email, answer the question or receive a text message, then approve and sign. It's definitely not rocket science!"

Trusted electronic signatures are now used in a number of processes at the CSSPB, making the work of multiple departments easier, including finance, materials resources, human resources, legal resources and general management.

"We are a three to four-hour drive from the Ministry of Education. When we have contracts that senior officials must sign, it only takes a few minutes now."

One of the numerous work cycles they have optimized concerns school transport providers who are external to the organization and who require multiple signatures.

Sonia also gives the examples of invoice approvals and hiring processes.

"We have seen significant productivity gains. (...) Before, we had to use internal mail and wait days and then send them in binders. Now, it goes into ConsignO Cloud and comes right back. Within a few hours, everything is archived and complies with our legal requirements."

And Sonia reiterates that integrations with tools like ConsignO Cloud have a real impact on students because they help existing resources focus on services rather than tasks with no added value.

“Since we’ve adopted electronic signatures, we feel that we have improved the services that students receive. Students are no longer the go-between between parents and the school when a document must be signed. They can focus on learning.”

And because digital technology is here for good, Sonia believes that schools have a role to play in teaching good technology practices.

Educating the public for a responsible digital future

95% of Canadians use the Internet.¹ For Sonia, schools must play a role in educating and raising awareness on the mass adoption of technologies.

“The digital world puts youth in a vulnerable position.”

Because what happens online involves risks, the CSSPB helps professionals and parents understand the importance of security and responsibility when it comes to using digital tools. She cites as an example the password requirement when sending documents containing confidential information.

“We make parents aware of the importance of protecting their children’s data, as well as their own. In many of our communications, we talk about security. (...) School services centres have a role to play in

the responsible digital transformation of our society.”

And she’s not wrong. The OECD estimates that a quarter of the world economy will be digital in 2027.² This means that the efficient and secure use of digital technology is no longer optional.

Understanding how we can control the use of our data, the terms of use for popular platforms, technology addictions and what makes one tool more reliable than another can have huge impacts on how society functions.

The CSSPB has become a leader in digital security in its community. Its use of responsible technologies allows young people to acquire the new skills they need while developing their critical thinking abilities.

In the end, Sonia and her team contribute significantly to the quality of teaching and situating schools in today’s world. It is clear that initiating her school centre’s digital transition, and indirectly her region’s, is a big motivator for her.

“Implementing change is a full-time job. It’s rewarding to help people, to support students, to empower them... (...) School services centres must be at the forefront of this process. We are responsible for shaping the generation of tomorrow.”

1: <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/canadians-among-global-leaders-in-internet-usage-and-smartphone-ownership-pew-research-center-study-shows-833834298.html>

2: <https://desapublications.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022-09/Chapter%205.pdf>

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