

FirstClass Case Study

Leysin American School in Switzerland

Founded in 1960, Leysin American School is a private boarding school located in Leysin, Switzerland near Lake Geneva. It provides quality education with a distinctive international flavour to its 350 students who are preparing for university.

- American international co-educational boarding school for university preparation
- Accredited high school with grades 9-12 for ages 14 to 19
- 350 students from 50 different nations and including all major religions and cultures
- Located in the Alpine resort village of Leysin in French Switzerland
- Complete integration of latest technology throughout the campus

Leysin American School initially encountered FirstClass when searching for a shared calendaring solution for the school. The Director of Information Technology, John Squier, was impressed by the wide range of functionality which FirstClass offered: "We thought we were looking for shared calendaring - but when we saw FirstClass, we immediately realised the capabilities were far more extensive and valuable to our community."

Today, FirstClass serves as the communications hub for staff, students and parents. "The email, instant messaging and collaboration facilities have revolutionised the way we communicate throughout the school on a teacher-parent, teacher-teacher and teacher-student level," says Squier. Students can log into the system outside school hours and even during vacation from home, consult the school calendar, read the latest news, check out their homework assignments and take part in online discussions.



Leysin American School's Student Desktop

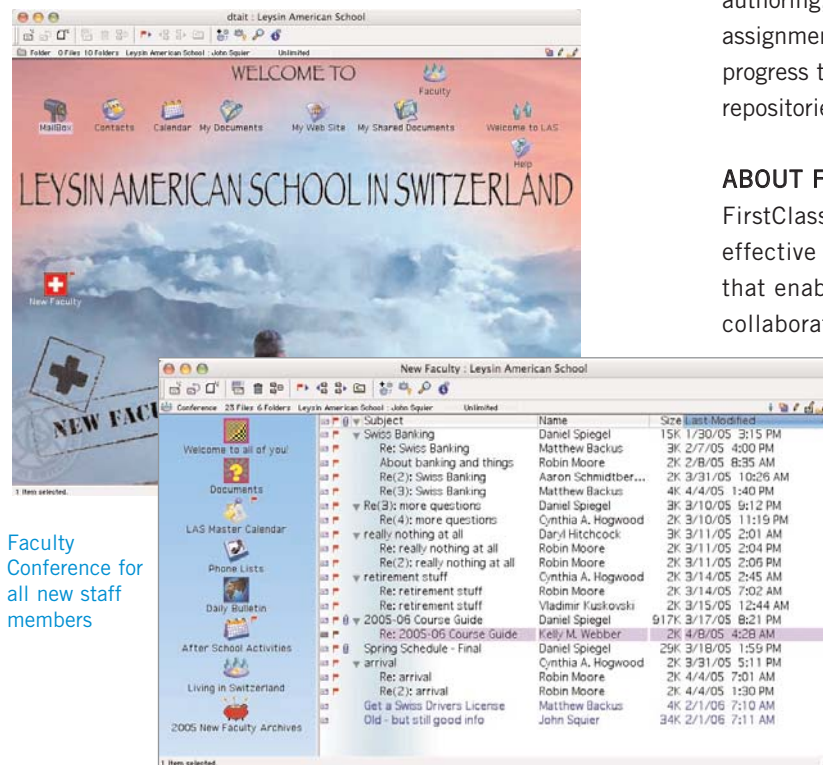
When considering different solutions, Leysin quickly discounted Microsoft Exchange because of cost and administrative concerns. "We don't really have the resources to administer systems like Exchange. The beauty of FirstClass is that you can easily push much of the administration out to super users who become administrators for their domains," says Squier.

According to Squier, "the collaboration capabilities of FirstClass are proving especially useful for the teaching community. Around 50 percent of the teaching staff are now using FirstClass shared workspaces called 'conferences' to provide students with curriculum specific information. All sorts of resources and materials can be added to these conferences using the simple drag n' drop capabilities of FirstClass. As Squier explained, "these conferences act as an excellent aide to structured learning by encouraging and facilitating the sharing of information as well as threaded discussion between and amongst staff and students." Conferences are not just restricted to areas of the curriculum. The school's location in the Swiss Alps means there are plenty of opportunities for skiing and snowboarding and conferences have been set up in FirstClass to enable the snow enthusiasts to share information, tips and experiences, etc.

The school has also established a number of conferences for broad based activities that span both teaching and administrative requirements. For example, all new staff members are given a FirstClass account in which they have access to the 'New Faculty' conference which contains the New Faculty Handbook, VISA application forms for Switzerland, a phone list for all people on campus, a copy of the Master Calendar and an area where they can have threaded discussions on all aspects relating to their new post. "The 'New Faculty' conference in FirstClass has improved our whole staff induction process enormously and is actively used by each new member of staff," says Squier.

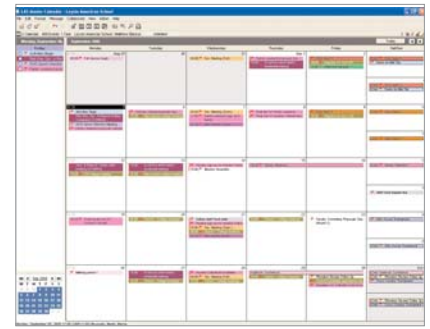
Also on the administration side, there is an extensive admissions and marketing conference that allows administration staff to track new student admissions including where in the world they are from. The school also maintains contact with its past students and alumni have their own conference where they can keep in touch with each other and the school. Elsewhere, elected student officials are monitoring their own conferences: "It's about putting control into the hands of those that are managing different aspects of school life - this helps create a sense of ownership of the system by all the various stakeholders who are using it," explains Squier.

One of the main attractions has been the fact that FirstClass is platform agnostic. Many of the teachers and an increasing number of students are using the Mac platform and FirstClass works equally well in both PC and Mac environments.



Faculty Conference for all new staff members

The school has also made extensive use of the calendaring features of FirstClass. Staff can use different shared calendars to schedule resources like the admissions car and video projection equipment and parents have access to the school's calendar so they can check on school activities.



At present, FirstClass is used by a total of 513 users including parents, students, alumni and staff. "We can only see FirstClass going deeper into the school as people discover how much they can achieve and how much time it saves in communications," says Squier.

In terms of the future of FirstClass at Leysin American School, Squier indicated that they are "very excited about the recent release of FirstClass ED", the new application for learning management that is designed to seamlessly integrate with the FirstClass communications and collaboration platform. With the introduction of FirstClass ED, schools can now easily deploy virtual classrooms that enable teachers and students to electronically manage many of the activities associated with the cycle of learning within a class. These include simple wizard-based electronic classroom creation, powerful tools for authoring, deploying and sharing curriculum, automated assignment workflow, effective student performance and progress tracking and online reference and resource repositories.

ABOUT FIRSTCLASS

FirstClass is a feature-rich, platform-independent, and cost-effective communications and collaboration software solution that enables businesses and learning organisations to create collaborative online communities that securely connect people and resources via any Internet-accessible device. FirstClass delivers a broad range of capabilities including email, instant messaging, calendars, contact management, collaboration, document sharing, file storage, web publishing and voice and fax messaging. Thousands of organisations and millions of users around the world are currently connecting via online communities powered by FirstClass. For more information on FirstClass, please visit www.firstclass.com

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