

# CIVICA

## { Smart Schooling

How to choose the right  
**management solution** for your school

### Meet the author - **Hayden Gyles**

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**Hayden is the Head of Customer Solutions at Civica.** With an extensive background in schools and technology, Hayden's teaching career has spanned many years across Germany and Australia, most recently in Melbourne as a Deputy Head of an independent girls school. In this role, Hayden implemented a Positive Education program as well as a revamped Student Leadership program. Hayden was Victorian Chair of the Positive Education Schools Association (PESA) for 5 years and completed his Master of Education at the University of Melbourne. In his role at Civica, Hayden has combined his passion for education with technology. His unique experience enables him to truly understand the challenges of managing and working within a school environment.



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## Introduction

During my time working in a school environment, I frequently encountered the challenge of finding a suitable technology platform that could not only assist me as a senior leader but also support my colleagues in efficiently managing the school's financial and administrative operations. With multiple systems and logins, it was difficult to access the right information to aid decision making. It was also challenging to create reports and understand what was going on with my students and the school overall.

It was equally challenging for the administrators within each school to manage cash flow coming in, meet the many complex compliance requirements, create accurate reports, and collect debt.

These constant challenges coupled with my interest in technology led me to move into a role where I could help develop solutions to improve the working experience of schools, administrators and leaders, IT staff, business managers and decision makers.

With over ten years' experience in schools and five in the technology space, I'd like to share my insights into how an effective school management system can enhance your administration, financial operations, reporting and compliance, leading to a more streamlined and efficient experience for your school.



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## Reducing the administrative burden

Many schools still rely on multiple systems that lack integration and fail to communicate with each other, resulting in inefficient and costly management of school administration. The need to repeatedly enter data increases the likelihood of errors, leading to the loss of valuable information. Furthermore, constantly asking parents to provide enrolment information each year is a negative experience that can be easily avoided.

Solutions with integrated databases and self-service portals for parents can help ease the administrative burden. If your team is manually entering student enrolment applications, you are using valuable admin time. Consider, even if you spend only 3 minutes per enrolment, for 500 students that's 1500 minutes of time or 25 hours of work for just one task! Imagine a system where families enter this data via an online enrolment form, which then feeds into your schools database! Or enabling families to view their fee statement live, setup payment of school fees, and access and update their family or student data directly into a school management platform ensuring efficient data management. These functionalities then improve cashflow, reduce phone calls and emails and enable your administrative team to focus on tasks that help your school serve your community more effectively.

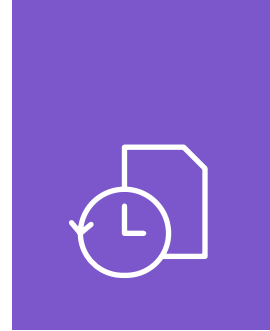
## A single source of data truth

Are you frustrated by having to use multiple systems to create necessary reports? You are not alone! A lack of data transparency is a major issue in schools. Finding a solution that can provide you with a single source of truth is critical, as it enables you to have confidence in the quality of your data; whether it is used for providing relevant information for the leadership team, school board, or various federal and state reporting requirements.

Equally important is the ability to extract data easily from your LMS and empower teachers with powerful reports that provide student, cohort and school level analysis enabling proactive risk management and the ability to monitor critical measures from cash reserves to revenue, fees etc.

As your school grows, you may decide to add additional functionality or to integrate with additional vendors. Therefore, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of your baseline data becomes even more imperative to mitigate risks and enhance compliance.





### Reducing downtime and data loss

Many schools continue to manage servers on site requiring specialist in house skills or external companies to provide server support as well as an investment in heavy security such as locked cages to reduce onsite theft. Current solutions require increased infrastructure investment, which escalates the cost of adopting and maintaining data on-site. Servers are at a much higher risk of hacking or cyber-attacks because schools do not have the financial capacity to invest in data security as cloud hosting organisations can. This increases the possibility of downtime and the potential loss of data.

Removing servers and transitioning to modern cloud-based solutions enables you to easily manage your data and compliance risks because a specialist organisation with the latest technology will manage these on your behalf. These specialist monitoring systems ensure they maximise the uptime of your platform and maintain security 24/7.

### Streamlining infrastructure support management for greater efficiency

As the demand for more technology in schools continues to grow, the need to manage infrastructure support has also increased. Managing tickets within the school itself has become burdensome with many schools having limited resources to address issues. This can lead to the inhouse IT team juggling multiple priorities. They may also struggle to keep up as more and more technologies are introduced across the school.

Moving to an integrated platform across the school enables you to outsource the ticket management function to specialist teams whose focus is on ensuring your system is updated regularly whilst remaining secure and compliant.

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## A strong core solution

As the number of companies offering school management tools continues to rise, it can be challenging to find a software solution that meets all your requirements. Many schools end up relying on multiple applications from different providers that lack integration, leading to frustration and putting the day-to-day management responsibilities on a single person within the school.

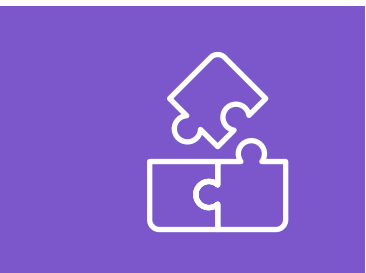
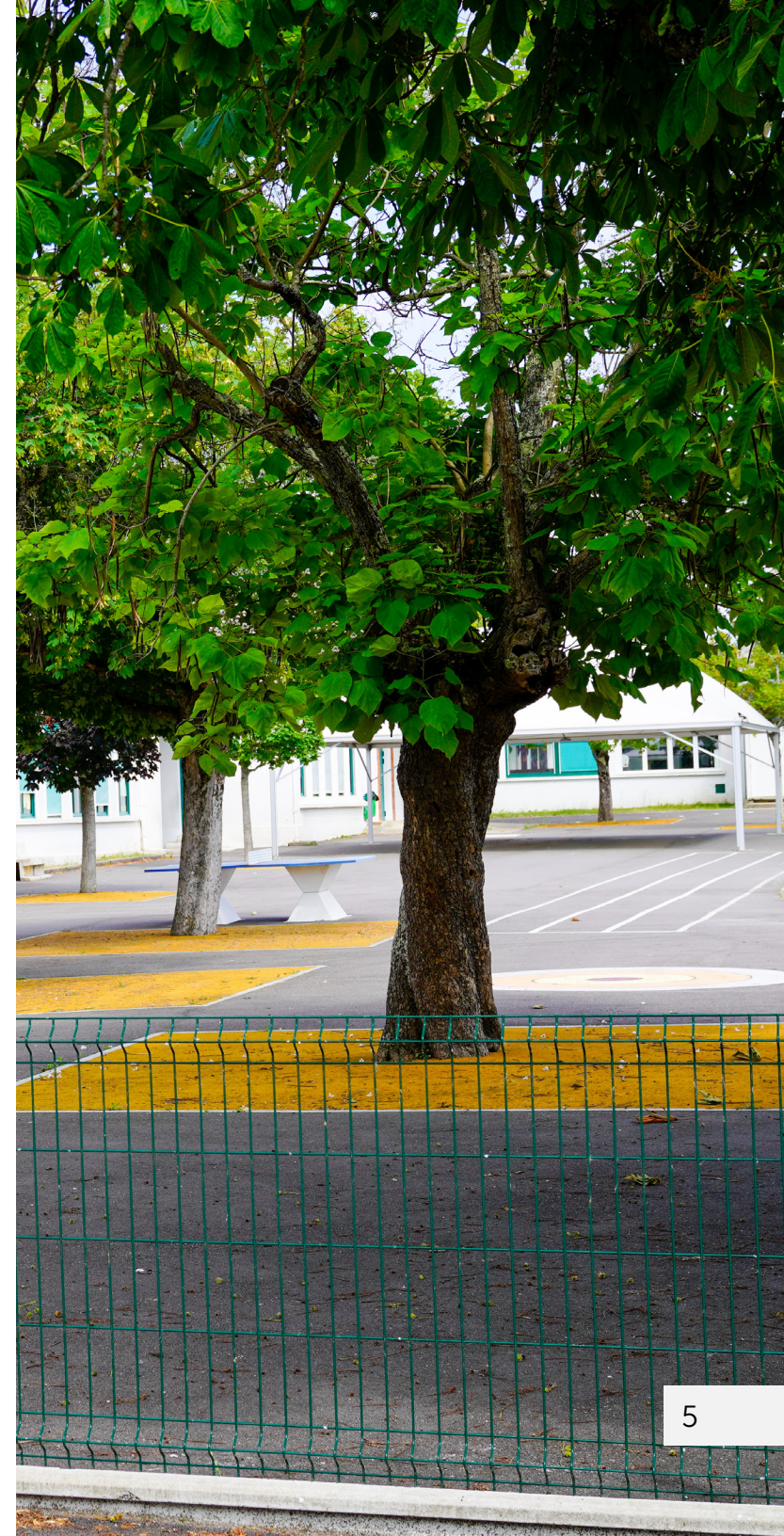
To address this issue, it is crucial to find a single software solution that covers the core administrative functions of the school, including exceptional administration, finance and billing modules, as well as an efficient self-service portal. By having access to these modules, schools can establish a strong foundation for streamlining their administration processes, while also ensuring compliance requirements are met.

Choosing a vendor who can provide these modules in a single solution allows for closer collaboration, reducing potential problems and improving time management.

## Improving user experience

Juggling multiple platforms in schools can be frustrating and time-consuming, with unique logins and interfaces adding to the challenge. Simplifying the process with a centralised software solution can improve efficiency and security. A single core platform enables all members of staff to seamlessly navigate through the data with a consistent user experience.

Schools are constantly in search of best practise solutions. In software, this includes intuitive help tools that walk the user through the screens. This is helpful during the learning stages of the software or when using a function infrequently. A good software solution will offer autonomy to users while providing guidance on how to complete tasks, significantly reducing the amount of time and frustration involved in navigating the software. This, in turn, makes change management more efficient and ensures a smoother transition to a better solution.



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## Understanding the needs of Australian schools

Offshore software providers claim to understand the Australian education system when they take a system designed for an offshore market and simply tweak the functionality. This leads to solutions that are inadequate for managing an Australian school and not designed to meet the many compliance and reporting needs.

When choosing a school management platform, it is important to consider solutions designed by Australian educational specialists. Not only will they understand the challenges, compliance and risk requirements within your school, but will provide support on the ground including product specialists, and a team, who can provide immediate assistance in your time zone.

## Meeting ever changing compliance requirements

School administrative staff play a crucial role in schools whether it be as the office managers, receptionist, financial controller or HR. Together, the data they maintain provides critical information for every other area of the school, and for external reporting. As you are aware in Australia's independent schools, the school leader or business manager will frequently also provide support in the area of compliance.

Compliance in schools involves meeting a complex list of rules and regulations including meeting the same governance standards as a registered business at a national level as well as being compliant with employment legislation, health and safety, building, fire codes, privacy and child protection laws.

If your school is eligible for government funding then you must meet legal requirements for the Australian Tax Office (ATO), the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. Being compliant involves creating reports easily from within your school management platform, not an easy task when you are running outdated and clunky solutions leading to large volumes of work for finance and admin teams, which are under pressure to deliver reports on time.

With so many wheels in motion, schools should consider utilising a school management platform which can streamline process with automated tasks; reduce errors and help admin teams stay on top of jobs. In addition, it should provide accurate reporting with a full range of compliance related reports; the ability to customise reports as well as a review process for data before it is submitted to state and government bodies.



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When I left education to join a technology company it was my ambition to make a difference by applying my inside knowledge of schools to school management technology. I'm passionate about what I do and now work every day to improve functionality and user experience for those in a school environment. My mission is to ensure schools are set up for success and have the right technology to make them successful both today, and into the future.

To find out more book a discovery call with me and the Civica team where we can discuss your challenges and how we can support the smooth operations of your school.



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