In today’s educational environment, it’s challenging to know what investments will meet today’s and tomorrow’s needs. Here’s how McGladrey’s IT assessment services helped the Mason City Community School District implement systems aimed at tackling their challenges.

**Background**

The school district was utilizing an antiquated computer network that consisted of a centralized mainframe system (System36) with token ring wiring, along with a disparate combination of personal and Apple computers coupled with a proprietary system for finances, grading and scheduling. The phone system was also dated and unable to keep up with current and future demands for communications.

School board officials needed to provide a rich learning environment for its students as well as the necessary tools for teachers and administrators to be more efficient. In order to accomplish these goals, officials had to make some important strategic decisions that would ultimately provide a strong foundation for decades to come.

**Project**

The school district enlisted the assistance of McGladrey to perform an extensive technology assessment with an emphasis on long-term strategic planning. Members of the McGladrey team spent time investigating current trends in educational technologies, and interviewing key stakeholders, including: administrators, instructors and board members. The team then examined alternative technologies available in the public and private sectors. After the team completed the information gathering phase, they created a comprehensive plan that included recommendations on:

- Structured wiring
- Network topologies
- Network infrastructure equipment
- Network servers and network operating systems
- Financial software systems
- Core school management software
- Telephony systems
- Collaboration software
- Security systems
- Network integrity systems

**Outcomes**

The school district implemented many of the recommended technology solutions and also created a technology mission statement that focused on providing students and staff with the necessary tools and available technologies to ensure long-term learning.

Years after the initial technology assessment, the school district continues to enlist the services of McGladrey. Some of the advanced technologies they have subsequently invested in are: widespread remote access, voice over IP, storage, server virtualization, thin client technologies and enhanced software systems.

The school district continues to set the pace in regard to its prudent investment in, and effective use of, technology to augment the performance of educational programs within continued budgetary constraints.