

# Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District Does Its Homework on Disk-Based Backup and Data Deduplication and Chooses ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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**Yvonne Anderson**  
Supervisor of  
Information Systems  
Northeast Metro 916

## Customer Overview

Located throughout the east metro area of White Bear Lake, Minnesota, the Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District provides programs to member districts that enable members to better serve their students. Northeast Metro 916 responds to the unique needs of students, educators, and school districts with innovation, quality, and trusted experience.

## Limited Retention and Long Backup Windows with Tape

The IT staff at Northeast Metro 916 is responsible for providing backup for all of the district’s network resources. They also provide backup for the document imaging data for three other member districts. The organization backed up approximately 1TB of data each week to tape but found that retention and lengthy backup windows were becoming more and more of a problem as its data continued to grow.

The task of tape backups was very time consuming. “It was just a very manual process,” said Yvonne Anderson, supervisor of information systems at Northeast Metro 916. “We would start the backup on Friday evening and it wouldn’t finish until late on Sunday,” said Anderson.

Combined with the inherent manual process of backing up to tape was the failure Northeast Metro 916 experienced at the end of their fiscal year – the worst possible time – effectively crippling their backup process. To reduce their backup window, Anderson and her IT staff undertook the task of evaluating disk-based backup solutions that were compatible with their existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec.

## Solution Provides Data Deduplication Ratio as High as 53:1, Backup Window Reduced to Four Hours

After considering its options, Northeast Metro 916 chose a two-site ExaGrid disk-based backup system with data

deduplication. ExaGrid’s approach to backup and data deduplication stood out from the other vendors they considered. They liked the fact that the ExaGrid provides faster backup times because the system writes the data out to disk and then deduplicates it after it’s backed up.

Since installing the ExaGrid system, the district is experiencing average deduplication ratios of 17:1 with some file types being deduplicated at a rate as high as 53:1. Their backup window has been reduced from a weekend to a mere eight hours. Anderson comments that her IT team has been able to reduce the amount of time they spend on managing and administering backups, and in addition they’re not spending money on tape anymore.

ExaGrid combines last backup compression along with data deduplication, which stores changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies. This unique approach reduces the disk space required by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 or more, delivering unparalleled cost savings and performance.

ExaGrid delivers extremely fast backup performance because data is written directly to disk, and data deduplication is performed post-process after the data is stored to reduce data. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid’s byte-level data deduplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.



## Easy Installation and Management, Responsive Support

Installing the ExaGrid system was an easy process, according to Anderson. All that's required is to unpack the unit, rack it, hook up the cables and work with ExaGrid's support team to configure it. A system can typically be up and running in just an hour or so.

"The best thing about upgrading to the ExaGrid is that the process just works," comments Anderson. "We set the backups and they run; there is very little work for me or my staff to do."

The ExaGrid system was designed to be easy to set up and maintain, and ExaGrid's industry-leading customer support team is staffed by trained, in-house engineers who are dedicated to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

According to Anderson, her team has had a good experience with ExaGrid's customer support. Northeast Metro 916 likes the self-monitoring and remote support services ExaGrid provides. She says, "Most of the time, my ExaGrid engineer knows about a potential problem before I do!"

The system can be easily expanded to handle more data as the organization's backup demands increase. ExaGrid's GRID computing software makes the system highly scalable, and when plugged into a switch, different sized configurations can be mixed and matched into a single GRID system with capacities of up to a 100TB full backup plus retention. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

## ExaGrid and Symantec Backup Exec

Symantec Backup Exec provides cost-effective, high performance and certified disk-to-disk-to-tape backup

and recovery – including continuous data protection for Microsoft Exchange, SQL, file servers and workstations. High performance agents and options provide fast, flexible, granular protection and scalable management of local and remote server backups.

## Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality SATA drives with byte-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's byte-level data deduplication technology stores only the changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies, reducing the amount of disk needed by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 or more, resulting in a solution that is 25 to 30% the cost of standard SATA drives. The ExaGrid system is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with popular backup applications, so organizations can retain their investment in existing applications and processes. ExaGrid servers can be used at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories for disaster recovery.

ExaGrid is the leader in cost-effective disk-based backup solutions. A highly scalable system that works with existing backup applications, the ExaGrid system is ideal for companies looking to quickly eliminate the hassles of tape backup while reducing their existing backup windows. ExaGrid's innovative approach minimizes the amount of data to be stored by providing standard data compression for the most recent backups along with byte-level data deduplication technology for all previous backups. Customers can deploy ExaGrid at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories or for disaster recovery.

**For more information about ExaGrid, please visit us at [www.exagrid.com](http://www.exagrid.com) or call us at 1-800-868-6985.**

## About ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

Customers worldwide depend on ExaGrid Systems to solve their backup problems—effectively and permanently. ExaGrid's disk-based, scale-out GRID architecture adjusts to increasing backup demands due to constantly growing data volumes. It is the only solution that combines compute with capacity as well as a unique landing zone to permanently shorten backup windows and eliminate expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at [www.exagrid.com](http://www.exagrid.com).