SchoolLeader Cloud Services (SCS)

Frequently Asked Questions and Overview

The following document is a general overview of the SchoolLeader Cloud services (SCS) and contains some technical discussion involving advanced topics about network security and communication. If you do not understand some topics, please ask for assistance or involve an experienced network technician/consultant to assist you.

Summary

Data is the fuel that drives your business and SchoolLeader. This data is stored within a physical storage device/computer which is collectively referred to as your "database". No matter how many computers you have running SchoolLeader, they are all accessing this single/common database.

Your SchoolLeader software can be setup to access an on-premise *local* database via your private LAN/Intranet, or a remote *cloud* database via the public Internet. Regardless of where you decide to physically locate the database, the user experience is the same. Business functions, windows, options, etc., are all identical. However, with a Cloud database, since the database is not longer housed locally, the administrative responsibilities are simpler and the database is accessible outside the confines of your local area network.

Feature Comparison

Deciding on whether to maintain your own local database or have it hosted by SchoolLeader, depends on your specific needs and priorities. The key pros and cons are outlined below to help you make a more informed decision on what is best for your business.

Local Database
Advantages:
- The database is completely within your control and no other person can access that data outside the school's physical LAN. If employees leave the business, you do not have to worry about revoking userids, etc.
- Accessing a local database is typically going to be faster than communicating over the internet. The actual performance difference will depend on the speed of your internet access compared to your local LAN, but you can expect it to be faster when run locally.

Disadvantages:
- Local databases are not easy to access if you are physically away from your local network. Accessing them in real-time from home, vacation, etc., might not be possible.
- Since the database must is administered by you, you are solely responsible for maintaining the server computer, performing regular maintenance on the database, performing daily backups, etc. There are costs related to this responsibility in terms of money and time. Initial and ongoing costs will vary depending on your setup and whether you do this yourself or hire a server administrator.

Cloud Database

Advantages:

- Since the "cloud" database is on a remote server accessible via the internet, you can access your data anytime, anywhere, and from any computer which can connect to the Internet. You can view your centers data and activity in real-time and make changes to that data just as easily as when you are at the school.
- No need to manage a Server computer for doing software updates, database maintenance, backups, etc. This is all included in the SchoolLeader Cloud Services.

Disadvantages:

- The database is not at your physical location and access to your data is dependent on you having access to a reliable good internet connection with at least 1000kb download speed and 500kb upload.
- There are extra costs for hosting services to maintain your database.

Frequently Asked Questions

Local or Cloud Hosted. Which is better?

It depends on your needs. Your SchoolLeader software can be easily setup to access your database from a local "on-premise" database via your locations private network, or it can be accessed from a remote cloud database via the public Internet. Regardless of where you decide to physically locate the database, the user experience in SchoolLeader is the same. Business functions, windows, options, etc., are all identical.

The difference is in maintenance and access of the database. With your database in our Cloud Servers, your administrative responsibilities are gone, the need to buy expensive servers is gone, and you can access your data outside the confines of your physical location. However, that easier experience and accessibility adds some costs to your SchoolLeader Support plan. Only you can decide which is best for your business needs.

What does SCS cost, and how does that compare to local hosting by myself?

There are different costs involved with both options and much of it is offset by the other. As a result, it is not possible to definitively advise which is more cost effective for you. Much depends on your business needs, operations, and database size. Regardless of the options you choose, all SCS accounts include:

- **No limit** on the number of SchoolLeader workstations that can access your Cloud database. No "per seat" charges or usage charges. It's a single flat monthly fee per school location.
- **Automatic Backup** service included. You no longer need to worry about, or maintain, your own backups or keep offsite copies.
- **Enhanced DataVault** account (a $119/yr value), at no additional cost, for maintaining up to ten (10) copies of your database.
- S**ecure hosting** of your server and database in a Microsoft "Azure" Data Center closest to your location. We maintain the health or your database and keep it optimally tuned for performance

Local database hosting will require an investment in time and money to purchase, repair, and periodically replace, on-premise equipment. You will also probably need to invest in some additional software, beyond SchoolLeader, to automate backups, upgrade the Operating System, and maintain the server. The costs can vary depending on the type of equipment you purchase and how much you perform on your own. These numbers will need to be determined by you, but feel free to contact us for assistance in estimating costs.

Cloud database costs using SCS are simply based on the amount of storage you use and are charged monthly. Initial pricing starts at 1GB and increases incrementally from there. There are no additional costs assessed based on how frequently you access the database or how many workstations you use. There are no contract commitments. Your monthly costs are stable and predictable as long as you manage the size of your database. If your database grows beyond a size threshold, you can move up to the next size, or purge data. We provide the tools to purge older data as needed, or let it grow for easy access and convenience. Please see our SCS Pricing Schedule or talk to a SchoolLeader representative for further details.

Are their any commitment or startup costs for moving my database to a Cloud Server?

There are no additional costs for the initial setup of your database. Initial purchase of SchoolLeader includes the setup of your database regardless of whether you choose to host it on-premise or use SCS. However, if you wish to move your database from an existing local database to SCS, or visa verse, there is a flat fee to perform the transfer. There is no limit to how often you can move between the two, however, there is a fee for each time you request a move. Please see our SCS Pricing Schedule or talk to a SchoolLeader representative for further details.

What if I change my mind and want to move my database back to a local server? How hard is it to do this?

If you want to move from SCS back to a local server, there is a small one-time fee to create an importable database for you and shut down the SCS services. We will provide you with this importable database ready to go with your local server. We also will provide the instructions for how to install the SchoolLeader server software and install the database engine. You can do the installation yourself, hire a local Computer Technician, or even hire SchoolLeader to perform the setup for you. For details on our fees for server setups, please see our SCS Pricing Schedule or talk to a SchoolLeader representative for further details

Do I need special equipment to use SCS?

No. SCS does not need special encryption devices like other Virtual Private Network (VPN) solutions. To make it even better, using SCS will eliminate the need for you to purchase your own server, maintain your own database, and perform your own data backup and recovery tasks. Since ther is no Server computer needed, it also eliminates the need to repair, upgrade, and replace expensive hardware. So, you do NOT need extra equipment AND you can actually get rid of some existing equipment and chores! Just think, no more corrupted or lost databases! No more network or firewall issues! No more expensive computer technicians to hire!

What type of maintenance does SchoolLeader perform which saves me time?

The SchoolLeader Cloud Service maintains your database in optimal condition at all times, and performs regular backups to prevent lose of data in the event of hardware failure. Once you deploy your database to an SCS database, you do not need to invest any additional time or money in hardware, software, or maintenance to keep the database running and available. In addition to backups to protect against failure, you can take additional "snapshot" backups to keep versions of data available for restoring and or archiving.

Is my data and communication secure in the Cloud Database?

Absolutely! Even though your database is on the web, it is safe and accessible only by YOU. With a special SchoolLeader "Cloud key" we provide, your data is fully encrypted to prevent anyone from intercepting or spying

on your data. Without possession of this special key, the data traveling over the internet is not accessible or readable.

Technically speaking, SchoolLeader transfers all data to and from your database using tabular data streams (TDS) over a Secure Socket Layer (SSL) connection using 128bit encryption. Data is always transmitted over a signed and encrypted connection, and the encryption handshake occurs in the PRELOGIN stream of the TDS. Any of your computers communicating with the remote Cloud database will have the proper software installed by the SchoolLeader setup process to ensure secure communication.

These processes ensure a secure transmission with virtually no possibility of a "man-in-the-middle" attack. However, this still does not guarantee security once data transmits to your computer. As with any locally managed server, you should always secure computers with anti-virus and anti-spyware software.

Where is my database physically located?

It depends on your school's primary location. We are partnered with Microsoft to use one of the largest Cloud Server networks in the world. We will be locating your server and database at a Microsoft Azure datacenter nearest to you. This reduces the chance of internet problems between you and the Datacenter. It also increases the chances that scheduled maintenance times (weekends and 0-dark-30 hours) will not conflict with your operations.

For reliability, the entire datacenter is regularly backed up to another datacenter in the region to protect against catastrophic events. Also, your specific database is constantly maintained in a triple mirrored state to prevent against local hardware failures. Microsoft Azure datacenters have an uptime reliability rating consistently near 99.97%. These are the same datacenters that host many of the Microsoft services you may already use, such as HotMail, Outlook 365, or XBOX online gaming.