

Trussville schools dream big

Teachers gain flexibility with HP business notebooks



“Within two years of being a school system, our access to technology resources will have almost tripled, primarily a result of bringing in HP notebooks. We are using technology to impact the lives of children in our district.”

– Shawn Nutting, Director of Technology, Trussville City Schools

Case study:
HP Notebook PCs
for grades 6-12

Industry: Education

Objective:

A new Alabama school district wanted the right technology foundation for a one-to-one computer initiative.

Approach:

HP and reseller Technology America provided the educational experience, notebook PCs and support to help bring teachers into the world of wikis, blogs and podcasts.

Benefits:

- New educational tools available to teachers
- Increased opportunities to personalize education for students
- Greater freedom for teachers to work away from school and gain more control over their personal lives
- Improved collaboration with administrators and other teachers
- Better-informed parents, thanks to teacher websites



Trussville gets a fresh start

On July 1, 2005, Trussville City Schools in Alabama won the lotto. At least that's how it felt to the parents and educators who worked for years to disconnect the community's schools from the large district that serves metropolitan Birmingham.

With the birth of the four-school, 4,000-student district came the funding to enable teachers and administrators to dream anew about how technology could be used to help raise the quality of education. From that process came the decision to implement a one-to-one computer-to-student initiative.

The district's first step was to give 300 teachers a year to explore how best to use technology in their classrooms. Following that, a grade-by-grade introduction of PCs would be implemented. The district's technology choice for grades 6-12: HP Compaq nx6125 Notebook PCs, purchased along with carrying cases from Technology America, an HP reseller and authorized service provider in Hoover, Alabama.

One-to-one leaders

Choosing HP PCs was the easy part of the district's technology transition, says Shawn Nutting, Trussville's director of technology. “We did a lot of research, and it was clear that HP had a lot of experience with schools on one-to-one computer initiatives. We saw that the company had put time and effort into professional development with schools, and they presented the case studies to prove it.”

Nutting also liked HP technology. “The HP notebook we chose has more features than competitive products, and it costs less,” he notes. Those features include a 14-inch screen, integrated wireless LAN* and a drive in which to play and record CDs and play DVDs. The six-pound notebook also has a spill-resistant keyboard,

This system may require upgraded and/or separately purchased hardware, drivers and/or software to take full advantage of Windows Vista functionality. Check www.windowsvista.com/getready for details.

Partner

Technology America is a full-line supplier of computer systems and peripherals. The company provides servers, notebooks and workstations, along with installation, maintenance, training and networking services.

www.technology-america.com

Contact the HP Customer Reference Program, 281-514-5755, for more information.

HP recommends
Windows Vista™
Business

biometric fingerprint sensor and a 6-in-1 card reader for use with digital cameras and other equipment.

"Also, I am very comfortable with the AMD Turion™ processor," says Nutting. "I've worked with a lot of companies that had always gone the AMD route. When I actually built computers, I used AMD processors."

Training for the 21st century

Once-a-week technology classes conducted by Nutting and his staff helped teachers learn about their new hardware and software.

Nutting also hired teacher April Chamberlain parttime to help Trussville teachers incorporate technology into their curriculum. She has since become the district's full-time technology integration specialist.

"Previously, most teachers viewed technology as a way to check e-mails and get on the Internet," says Chamberlain. A four-hour workshop she developed included training on Microsoft® SharePoint Portal Server, the platform chosen for individual teachers' Web sites. Those password-protected sites are accessible by students and parents outside of school. She also set up an online development-on-demand program called "May the Tech Be With You."

Creativity makes learning personal

As Nutting and Chamberlain hoped, teachers are using the technology in many creative ways. Some examples:

- A physics teacher capturing students' tennis swings on video and using software that relates their swings to physics principles
- Frequent use of WebQuests, which challenge students to explore the Web for information
- Use of instant messaging to answer student questions after school
- Development of social networking tools such as blogs, wikis and podcasts
- Filmmaking with Windows® Movie Maker and sharing photos on SharePoint

That's just the beginning of what's possible, says Nutting. He cites Chamberlain's work with even younger students who come to school early to write stories, develop PowerPoint presentations and create movies for the morning announcements.

Faculty meetings, meanwhile, have become more productive and interactive, he says. "Teachers are bringing their notebooks and sharing WebQuests or videotape presentations they did in the classroom earlier that day. It's no longer the principal lecturing and handing out forms. The forms are already on the SharePoint site."

Microsoft OneNote is another popular collaboration tool, Nutting adds. Notes taken during meetings can be distributed wirelessly before meetings are concluded.

More flexibility for teachers

Portability of the HP notebook PCs has helped teachers better schedule their days. "They no longer are tied to the classroom until 6 p.m.," Nutting says. "They can leave at 3:30 p.m., take their notebooks home and connect to the district's Virtual Private Network. They can do anything they need to for class from the privacy of their homes."

Why HP and Technology America

Nutting is impressed with the support from HP and Technology America. When the school's new notebooks arrived just two days before the district was to deliver them to teachers, a team of technicians from Technology America unboxed the PCs, asset tagged them and installed the school's software image.

As for hardware reliability, Nutting expected an out-of-box failure rate of 1 percent. He got much better than that, and the few PCs that did fail were repaired by Technology America the next day. The notebooks are sturdy, he adds. "Our teachers are putting their PCs in the carrying bag and throwing them in the trunks of their cars. They are holding up extremely well."

Still, Nutting believes the optional accidental damage protection the district purchased, on top of the standard three-year limited warranty, is a good investment. "Literally, if a student drops a notebook down a flight of stairs and it breaks, we pick up the pieces and mail them back to HP and get a new PC."

Nutting is hopeful he won't need to collect on the damage-protection policy. "The notebooks are a tool that students will be enthralled with. It's one thing we think they'll keep track of and take care of."

*Wireless access point required and is not included. Wireless Internet use requires separately purchased Internet service contract.

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