

Cobb County School District replaces 9,500 printers with Lexmark desktop and workgroup models. Standardized approach and warranty plans eases maintenance and management of the new fleet and significantly reduces costs for the district.

Cobb County School District standardizes on Lexmark printers to cut costs, simplify maintenance and boost teacher productivity

The Organization

As the second largest school system in Georgia, the Cobb County School District educates more than 106,000 students in a diverse, constantly changing suburban environment. With nearly 8,800 highly-qualified teachers and administrators, the district is the largest employer in Cobb County with more than 15,000 employees in 120 facilities. With the majority of the district's approximate \$1 billion general fund budget being used for personnel and curriculum initiatives, it is often very difficult to fund district technology projects. Other funding sources such as SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) are being used to implement ongoing projects to refresh all of the district's computer workstations and provide a laptop computer for every teacher.

The Challenge

The Cobb County School District, like so many others in the U.S., installed thousands of printers in its offices and classrooms over a period of years, acquiring them from different manufacturers and suppliers, and under separate purchasing contracts. This menagerie of makes and models necessitated keeping multiple maintenance plans in force and also required an on-hand inventory of dozens of different toner and ink cartridges. Both practices were costing Cobb County tens of thousands of dollars that could be directed elsewhere to enhance students' learning experiences.

The district knew it lacked consistency and that it had to standardize on a single output technology platform to simplify administration and reduce costs.

Toward that end, Cobb County officials tested an array of printers from several manufacturers, comparing many factors that included acquisition price and maintenance costs, reliability, manageability, and most important, total cost of ownership (TCO) over the projected working lifetime of the products. This factor turned out to be crucial. While some

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– Chris Ragsdale
Chief Technology Officer
Cobb County School District
Marietta, Ga.
www.cobbk12.org

manufacturers choose to set attractive initial purchase prices, the TCO of many of them over several years was considerably higher.

After inviting several vendors to bid on a system-wide printer refresh in its classrooms, computer labs, school offices, and administrative headquarters, the Cobb County School District chose a comprehensive solution from Lexmark designed to standardize the entire fleet on a single manufacturer, lower costs and simplify maintenance.



The Solution

In parallel with a major project to replace all of its aging computers, the district retired most output devices replacing them with Lexmark laser printers. In just five months, more than 9,500 Lexmark printers were installed. Virtucom, a Lexmark business partner in the Atlanta area, completed the printer rollout and implementation in conjunction with the Cobb County School District Technology Services Department. Lexmark field engineers also removed the existing equipment.

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A desktop Lexmark laser printer was installed in each classroom throughout the district, giving every teacher arms-length access that maximizes time in the classroom, rather than a hallway. Lexmark's "E" series desktop laser printers include two-sided duplex printing as a standard feature, drastically cutting paper consumption. In cost-conscious times, this capability alone is saving the district more than \$100,000 annually.

In school offices, labs and the district's headquarters, Lexmark "T" series workgroup monochrome laser printers were installed. Capable of output speeds up to 50 pages per minute, these printers can handle adhesive labels, heavy media, recycled media and specialty forms.

Understanding that color is critical in portions of the educational experience, and for producing management reports, the district also installed about 1,200 departmental color laser printers. The district allocated one color laser printer for every six classrooms in each school. Each school was empowered to place the color laser printers in the most beneficial locations for students, teachers and administrators. "It is our intent to provide teachers with the tools necessary to positively impact the classroom environment," said Chris Ragsdale, Chief Technology Officer. "Lexmark is helping to maximize access to a consistent printing solution networked in each classroom."

In parallel with the deployment of its 9,500 Lexmark printers, the Cobb County School District installed more than 30,000 workstations; primarily

Dell PCs running Windows® and some Apple® Macintosh® units in schools specializing in music and arts.

Now needing to stock only three types of toner cartridges (for its "E" and "T" series monochrome and "C" series color laser printers) the district streamlined its purchasing practices and greatly reduced the inventory kept on-hand. In the district's purchasing list, it authorizes the purchase of genuine Lexmark cartridges only. And to assure high levels of availability at the lowest cost, all the Lexmark devices are covered under a single maintenance agreement, which the district chose to extend to five years.

The Results

Cost savings for the district have been immediate and dramatic. The previous annual expenditure of more than \$100,000 for equipment repair has been eliminated. Reliability is up. So, too, is print quality.

For the professional staff, immediacy has become a welcome benefit. "Our teachers are excited to have a networked printer in their classrooms," said Chris Murray, the district's Director of IT Field Services. "They get what they need immediately, and without having to leave their rooms."

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Standardization on Lexmark models has simplified network administration and adds a familiarity factor when a teacher moves from one classroom to another or anyplace in the district. "With education, it's not possible to simply choose a vendor," said Murray. "It's necessary to go through a grueling evaluation process that examines costs, performance, functionality, warranty, and other factors. After our exhaustive evaluation, Lexmark met our requirements best, offered aggressive pricing and had the most comprehensive support and warranty plan."

Cobb County School District prides itself on being among the most technologically advanced and forward-thinking school districts in the nation. With its Lexmark printers, it is also among the most cost-efficient when it comes to printing.