

Lexmark helps one middle school in the Auburn-Washburn Unified School District reduce costs by about \$30,000 by implementing new monochrome and color laser printers. The district's use of genuine Lexmark supplies and parts keep its printers up and running and costs dropping.

## Midwest school district gives Lexmark high marks for slashing costs, standing behind its products

### The Organization

Encompassing 128 square miles of the greater Topeka, Kansas region, the nine schools that comprise the Auburn-Washburn Unified School District challenge and educate more than 5,100 students every year.

With students whose diverse backgrounds range from city neighborhoods to rural farms, the district's certified staff of nearly 430 teaches traditional scholastics, cultivates creativity and prepares those students to assume roles as responsible citizens in a global community.

### The Challenge

As with all publicly funded school systems, the Auburn-Washburn Unified School District's operating budget demands that expenses be tightly controlled without compromising academic quality.

In looking for places to rein in spending, the hundreds of inkjet printers distributed throughout its nine schools became an easy and logical target. These inkjet printers were expensive to operate and were unable to keep up with the demands of students, teachers and administrators.

Long a leader in leveraging the power of technology to boost the academic experience, Auburn-Washburn had a fleet of more than 550 inkjet printers in classrooms, labs and in administrative offices. These devices printed about 1.3 million pages each year.

At just one middle school, the annual expenditure for ink cartridges to keep its 120 inkjets operating exceeded \$12,000, an unacceptably high amount to Principal Jerry Meier.

"These funds came straight out of the teaching-supply budget," said Meier. "We wanted to do better, for our teachers and our students. I knew there had to be a way to reduce our costs and put those funds back into the hands of the teachers for supplies they really need."

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Topeka, Kan.  
[www.usd437.net](http://www.usd437.net)

In addition to the costs, these inkjet printers were being called on to generate far more pages than they were designed to deliver. Internet projects, tests, reports, classroom projects, and bulletins stretched the capabilities of the inkjet devices. In addition, teachers and students



Middle school in Topeka, Kansas saves precious budget dollars with Lexmark solution.

often had to wait for documents to be printed, and they had to collate and staple multi-page documents manually.

Don Williams, Auburn-Washburn's Director of Information Technology, welcomed the challenge, especially since he had tackled similar projects in previous positions. Opting to transform a looming district-wide problem into a money-saving opportunity, Williams and his team set out to find a more optimal solution that would reduce costs, speed up printing and make manual stapling a thing of the past.

But more than that, the school district knew it needed a partner it could count on before, during and after the sale. Williams knew just the partner he wanted, based on his past experience with the company.

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### **The Solution**

Lexmark analyzed three schools in the district to gain first-hand insight into usage patterns along with understanding teacher and student requirements. The study detailed device counts, locations, page counts and a cost analysis of its current environment in one elementary, middle and high school.

The study also detailed the cost savings, productivity gains and improved reliability made possible by replacing its fleet of inkjet printers with fewer, more powerful Lexmark monochrome laser printers.

Moving ahead with a pilot project, the Auburn-Washburn team started with its middle school and installed one Lexmark 40 page per minute (ppm) monochrome laser printer for each “pod” of four classrooms.

The devices were installed in a convenient, central area that is shared by all four classrooms.

Several monochrome laser printers were equipped with duplexers and finishers and placed in the teachers’ workrooms, allowing teachers to print on both sides of every sheet of paper and collate and staple documents automatically. In addition, they also installed one shared, high-speed 20 ppm color laser printer in the school’s administrative office for those times when color output was deemed essential.

Williams’ past experience also made it easy for him to use genuine Lexmark supplies and parts in his printers.

“I have used remanufactured cartridges in the past and will never go back,” said Williams. “We had to clean the printers monthly and we never got the page counts promised. Printer downtime was a major issue and there were a lot of wasted prints because of ‘dirty’ pages being printed and then having to be printed again. The up-front cost savings just wasn’t worth it in the long run.”

With genuine Lexmark toner cartridges, Williams performs only one light cleaning on his printers annually, saving considerable staff time. “But, most of all, I don’t get calls from students and teachers about printer issues anymore.”

### **The Results**

The cost savings for the school has been immediate. In the first year, the middle school reduced costs by \$12,000 in inkjet supplies alone. Williams estimates that an additional \$7,000 will be saved annually in that one school over the life of the three-year contract.

“The reaction from teachers and students on the new solution has been very positive,” said Williams. “Jobs print faster, reducing waiting time, even though four classrooms now share a single printer. Print quality is better and reliability is up. And, teachers can staple and collate documents automatically.”

As an unexpected benefit, the school’s copy volumes decreased now that multiple copies of a document can be quickly and easily printed on the laser printers instead of being hand-carried and copied on the office-area copiers. The new approach has also helped minimize the printing of personal documents using school equipment.

“Lexmark printers are workhorses,” said Williams. “They are significantly faster and far more reliable than our previous devices, and when a unit does need service, we know the parts are available.”

In addition, Lexmark’s well-written service libraries provide all the information necessary for the district to service its own printers,

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another strategy in Auburn-Washburn’s efforts to maintain tight fiscal control over spending.

With the pilot conversion complete in one school and financial benefits proven, Auburn-Washburn is gearing up to replace its inkjets one school at a time, eventually moving throughout the entire nine-school district.

“This project has been so successful because we put a good plan in place and then had the benefits of a great staff who eagerly implemented it and embraced it,” said Meier.

School budgets are expected to remain tight for the foreseeable future. For Topeka’s Auburn-Washburn Unified School District, every dollar saved by replacing expensive-to-operate inkjet printers with frugal shared laser printers is being used to provide students with a better education experience.

“Lexmark is a strong team that understands our needs and supports our ongoing efforts with products that are economical to operate and highly reliable,” said Williams. “And knowing that there is strong technical support and a quality parts organization within Lexmark that will keep our printers running for years made Lexmark the clear choice for us. It sure means a lot to work with a partner that stands behind its products like Lexmark does.”

For the Auburn-Washburn Unified School District, Lexmark’s education-industry expertise, reliable products, and devotion to a successful implementation put it at the head of the class.