

Rigorous testing shows that Lexmark printers – and Lexmark personnel – can deliver superior performance and expertise, in the classroom and to a very demanding customer.

Syracuse City School District switches to Lexmark as its exclusive printer supplier

The Organization

With nearly 22,000 students, 4,100 staff and an annual budget of \$400 million, the 34 schools of the Syracuse City School District in upstate New York, have long enjoyed a reputation as an academic leader. Technology is an essential component of the education experience that the Syracuse public school system provides for its students. In a major update, the district is spending millions of dollars to deploy a fiber-optic network with full redundancy to all of its facilities and is expanding its Institute of Technology to reach more students. It is also refreshing many of its computer systems and applications across both the Macintosh and PC platforms it supports.

The district is in the midst of an important initiative, “Building the Future Together,” that emphasizes student achievement through collaboration among community members and the district. In fact, the district recently completed an award-winning collaboration with the Syracuse police department that allows law-enforcement personnel to monitor the schools in real time, speeding response time in the event of an emergency.

The Challenge

Attached to its fiber-optic network that extends throughout 36 distinct buildings, are thousands of printers that support learning and the administrative processes required to make it all hum. Overtime, the district found that the aging printers installed in its classrooms and administrative offices no longer measured up, economically, in terms of reliability, and when it came to the responsiveness of the vendor that manufactured them.

“The district’s existing printer platform no longer performed up to our total cost of ownership standards,” said Mary Ellen Killenbec, Director of Technology for the Syracuse City School District.

When the time came to refresh its fleet of several thousand printers, the Syracuse City School District, at the urging of Killenbec, decided to look

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at alternative vendors. The district launched an initiative to find a more cost-effective solution and one from a partner that was committed and responsive.

The Solution

One of the district’s major technology suppliers, CDW, recommended taking a close look at Lexmark, a manufacturer the district had not considered previously.



“I was immediately impressed with Lexmark’s knowledge of the education industry and the team’s professionalism,” said Killenbec. “In our first face-to-face meeting, Lexmark brought in people who could answer any technical question we had, explain the integration potential with our student information system and even set up nearly a dozen products for us to examine on the spot,” Killenbec said.

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After passing an initial round of rigorous testing and training for the technicians, Killenbec’s department hosted a hands-on hardware fair designed to obtain buy-in from the district’s 34 schools and other facilities. Representatives throughout the district were able to see each Lexmark product, use it and talk to nearly a dozen Lexmark employees specializing in K-12 education. “I’ve never seen anything like it. The whole experience was nothing short of impressive,” Killenbec said.

Moving to a new supplier of any technology is a challenge and certainly isn’t taken lightly at Syracuse City School District. In this case, the considerations went well beyond simply rolling in thousands of printers. Because the district is a self-maintainer of all its technology products, the staff would require training and certification by Lexmark and would need to build up a spare parts inventory. “Lexmark did not take our maintenance needs lightly and responded by flying in an expert from out of state to provide a week of in-depth hands-on training for our in-house technicians,” said Killenbec.

Lexmark field engineers worked with school representatives to assure that products of the correct type and capacity were specified for each location, including classrooms, offices and even labs that teach courses in computer-aided design. The district selected Lexmark desktop monochrome laser printers for classrooms, high-volume monochrome lasers with multiple paper trays and two-sided duplex printing capability

for administrative offices and specifically for student testing and color laser printers for libraries and other specialty departments, such as marketing. The district also uses Lexmark’s MarkVision Professional to analyze printer usage patterns so that printers can be relocated if actual page counts differ from the district’s estimates in a particular area or department.

The Results

For the district, moving to Lexmark has been smooth and problem-free, requiring only minimal training for administrators and teachers. The new Lexmark printers are actively in use now throughout the district and teachers, administrators and students are discovering new capabilities that were not possible with the previous models that were installed. Teachers are able to print PDFs from a USB flash drive using the interface on the Lexmark printer’s operator panel. Teachers and administrators are using the Confidential Print feature that will release documents at the printer only when a password is entered at the device. This feature keeps sensitive documents out of the output bin until the right person is there to retrieve them.

“Working with Lexmark has been an example of how vendor partnerships are supposed to work,” said Killenbec. “Lexmark answered every question, worked within our policies, responded quickly and treated people throughout the district with complete respect. I knew from our very first meeting that choosing Lexmark was the best decision we could make.”

With a successful partnership firmly in place and deployment of thousands of printers underway, the district is now looking ahead. Demand for color printing capability is expanding as the Syracuse schools produce everything from brochures to test results and even classroom materials for its youngest students. Killenbec’s team is also evaluating Lexmark’s Education Station MFP to more quickly and affordably produce bubble sheets for student testing, score tests automatically and feed results into the district-wide student information system.

“It is not just the product that is important to us,” Killenbec said. “We must know that the vendor will understand our requirements, work according to our rules and respond to our needs quickly. Lexmark is doing all of these things and more.”

Syracuse is upstate from New York, N.Y., but given the city’s reputation for rigorous testing and high expectations both from the products it buys and the companies that manufacture them, if Lexmark can make it here, it can make it anywhere.