

Low-cost computing for green education

New York school district slashes computing and energy costs

Challenge

Replace outdated PCs with modern equipment on an extremely tight budget.

Solution

Deploy NComputing virtual desktops in district schools, libraries, and computer labs.

Impact

Hardware costs and IT support cut drastically; energy usage cut by as much as 15%, earning the district a \$3000 rebate.

With the computer now firmly established as a critical teaching tool, outdated PCs don't cut it in schools today. Wantagh Union Free Schools on Long Island learned this lesson first-hand. All of the district's computers were at least ten years old, incredibly slow, and unable to support critical educational and office software. Even worse, the district's budget had been cut to the point where they couldn't possibly find enough money to buy all of the new PCs necessary to meet its educational goals. The obstacles looked insurmountable.



NComputing provides a seamless experience for students

The search for solutions

"We were feeling trapped between our lack of money and our mission to provide the educational tools our teachers and students require," said Don Murphy, Wantagh's director of technology. "We started searching for solutions that we could afford."

The district quickly saw that new PCs would be far too costly for the available budget. "We needed to be able to provide 500 seats for our students and teachers, and PCs—even used PCs—were completely beyond our budget," continued Mr. Murphy. The district also looked at traditional thin clients, discovering that licensing and equipment costs pushed that approach beyond reach. "During our research into thin clients we came across an NComputing deployment at another district here on Long Island. They spoke very highly of NComputing, so we decided to take a look."

The Wantagh technology department went on a site visit to see the NComputing devices in action. "What we saw was a seamless environment where students and teachers had access to all the computers that were needed. What we heard were rave reviews for both the cost and performance of the NComputing devices," said Mr. Murphy.

“The feedback we heard was ‘thank you, thank you!’”

DON MURPHY
DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY
WANTAGH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Thank you, NComputing!

The Wantagh IT team deployed NComputing in a secondary-level science classroom and an elementary school classroom. “The teachers were just blown away—in fact the only initial feedback we heard was ‘thank you, thank you!’ After running the pilot program for two months, we went to the board of education and presented our findings.”

That presentation put the wheels in motion for a broader deployment of NComputing. “With NComputing, we had the budget for the 500 seats we needed to provide.” That meant the district could actually outfit every single elementary school in the district, including the libraries and computer labs. “Purchasing that many PCs would have been impossible,” added Mr. Murphy.

Dramatic drop in energy, IT support

Before NComputing, the district’s monthly energy bill averaged \$46,000. Working with the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA), the district benchmarked those costs, and after deploying NComputing realized immediate savings. In fact, according to the LIPA study, the district was projected to save 303,745 kilowatt hours—an annual savings of more than \$54,000.

“The NComputing deployment will completely pay for itself—in energy savings alone—in just a few years,” according to Mr. Murphy. “Even better, LIPA presented our district with a rebate check for \$3,000 based on the amount of energy we’d saved over the previous year. We also upgraded our network at the same time as the NComputing deployment, so we can manage all of our PCs from our network operating center. We can even shut them down from there at night, so we expect to save even more in energy costs.”

“With NComputing deployed we also saw an immediate and significant drop in calls for IT support,” said Mr. Murphy. “Now the tech support calls we get are typically from teachers who want help expanding the educational opportunities that the computers offer their students. And it’s usually something very simple, like help with accessing video streaming websites. On our old machines, viewing streaming media simply wasn’t possible.”

NComputing has proved capable of running even demanding applications. “In our high school computer lab, where compute-intensive software like Adobe Creative Suite is in use, we are going to deploy at a ratio of one PC to two NComputing devices.

“The feedback regarding the NComputing devices from our teachers and students has been fantastic. The roadblocks that were in the way of modernizing our technology have been removed, and our students have the computer access they need to succeed,” said Mr. Murphy.

