

Low-cost computing for education

Winona Makes The Grade With State-Mandated Tests

With most states moving mandated tests from paper-based to online, schools like Winona Area Public Schools, are faced with the challenge of having too many students and not enough PCs. The majority of the 1,000 desktop computers they were using were old and unreliable, not giving students the access they needed to the required software and tests. The older lab computers were not capable of accessing the online testing websites. The district had no choice but to find a solution that would allow them to upgrade—with very limited budget.



Students now take state-mandated tests on NComputing virtual desktops.

The situation at Winona was dire and compounded by inadequate technology funding from the state. A number of local tax hikes that would have provided funding were defeated at the polls. The previous best method for dealing with these shortcomings was to continually repair aging machines and accept donated used machines.

The district desperately looked for a better solution. They looked at traditional thin clients and server-based computing, but balked at the high software and server prices.

Virtual Desktops Solve The Problem

The district finally found a solution, maximizing their investment in PCs with NComputing's virtual desktop technology. The NComputing solution is based on a simple fact: today's PCs are so powerful that the vast majority of applications only use a small fraction of the computer's capacity. NComputing's virtualization software and hardware tap this unused capacity so that multiple users can simultaneously share it. Each user's monitor, keyboard, and mouse connect to the shared PC through a small and very durable NComputing access device. The access device itself has no CPU, memory, or moving parts so it is rugged, durable, and easy to deploy and maintain.

NComputing enabled the district to finally deal with the limited and inconsistent technology funding that it had been struggling with for the past decade. Not only does the district now have fewer PCs to maintain, making more efficient use of their technical support staff, more students are able to take their mandatory state testing online.

Challenge

Upgrade and maximize computer labs to enable students to take tests online, and to make the most of limited maintenance and support costs.

Solution

Increased the number of seats available to students without adding complexity for IT support.

Impact

Provided more computing access while saving money and increasing reliability.

Top Grades And Extra Credit

In addition to establishing wide-scale online state testing, the NComputing solution is helping the district reach their goals of:

- Cost effectiveness
- Reduced maintenance, repair, and support
- Hardware efficiency
- Compatible, acceptable, comfortable equipment
- Reduced energy use
- Simplified adaptability to change
- Reduced obsolescence
- Single consistent hardware and software platform

Kevin Flies, Director of Information Systems at Winona Area Public Schools says, “staff and students have not really noticed any difference between using this system and having individual PCs. The installation and setup is extremely simple and takes very little time.”

The district figures their cost per seat is 40% less than that of a traditional desktop lab. More importantly, it will yield a 70% savings when the next PC upgrade cycle comes around (they only have to purchase shared computers—not monitors, keyboards, mice, speakers, or access devices). The success of the state testing paved the way for upgrading student computer labs in eight more buildings. Best of all, even though the systems were purchased for state-mandated testing, they will engage students and enrich their learning experiences throughout the school year.

“The NComputing solution significantly improved our efforts to accomplish our goals.”

Kevin Flies
Director of Information Systems
Winona Area Public Schools



1 Lagoon Drive, Suite 110, Redwood City, CA 94065 | Phone: 1-650-594-5800 | Fax: 1-650-594-5801 | ncomputing.com

© Copyright 2003-2011. NComputing, Inc. All rights reserved. NComputing is the property of NComputing. Other trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners. Specifications subject to change without notice. Performance may vary, depending on the configuration of the shared computer.

SUCCESS STORY WINONA (EN) REV1