

Low-cost computing for education

Australian school integrates e-learning into curriculum

Challenge

Cost-effectively upgrade Wodonga South Primary School's computers to support e-learning initiatives while increasing computing access for students.

Solution

Deploy NComputing in senior-level classrooms, a new library computer lab, and junior classrooms.

Impact

Cost savings of \$35,000 enabled the school to purchase new LCD monitors, eliminating bulky CRTs and reducing the number of PCs to increase desktop space. Students are significantly more engaged as a result of increased computer access.

Like many schools around the world, Wodonga South Primary School in Victoria, Australia wanted to take advantage of e-learning software applications that support the school's mission "to continually develop an engaging learning environment that promotes academic success." They planned to install a new computer lab in the library with enough seats for common access. At the same time, they wanted to increase computing access in the senior-level classrooms to better prepare students for secondary school.



Wodonga South Primary School has helped students become more engaged in learning, and helped teachers provide more personal instruction.

Outdated PCs, undersized budget

With just four PCs in the school's senior classrooms, only a few of the students could use the computers. Limited access meant that the computers couldn't be effectively integrated into the classroom curriculum, and that kept the school from helping students to realize the full benefits of today's effective and engaging e-learning programs.

Wodonga South's technology plans called for the rollout of new PCs every four years. With PCs that were six years old, that rollout was long past due. Faced with insufficient budget to replace the existing computers, let alone provide computing access for every student in the computer lab, the school needed to find a cost-effective solution.

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GAVAN BROWN
SCHOOL COORDINATOR
WODONGA SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

“We had tried thin-client technology, but found that maintaining the network and providing tech support was a problem,” said Gavan Brown, information and communication technology (ICT) and e-learning coordinator at Wodonga South. “Our old, bulky CRTs also took up a lot of space in our classrooms, where we had little room to spare. We simply couldn’t afford both new PCs and monitors. Then we heard about the NComputing solution.”

Unused PC capacity equals increased access

Today’s PCs are so powerful that the vast majority of applications use only a small fraction of the computer’s capacity—even the school’s recently acquired used PCs. NComputing’s virtualization software and hardware tap this unused capacity so that multiple students can simultaneously share.

With the NComputing solution, Wodonga South stretched its budget dollars so far that every senior class now has seven computing stations, the library computer lab has been deployed with one station for every student, and the school has even been able to add stations to its grade 3 and 4 classrooms. Plus, every one of the old CRT monitors has been replaced with a new LCD monitor. With a total of 62 stations now in place, the school plans to deploy the NComputing solution in more classrooms, with additional deployments in the future as funds become available.

Computing is integrated into the classroom

“The cost savings were tremendous with the NComputing solution,” said Mr. Brown. “Even with the expense of the new LCD monitors, we’ve saved more than \$35,000 just on the initial deployment. Even better, we’re extremely happy with the performance of the NComputing devices, and have substantially reduced the amount of support we need to provide to keep everything up and running. There’s also a lot more room for the students because there are fewer desktop PCs, and no more bulky CRTs that generate a lot of heat and take up a lot of space.”

With the increased computing access, Wodonga South’s teachers have been able to keep more students engaged via e-learning programs and special projects. And students are building their own digital portfolios that demonstrate their understanding of what they’ve learned. The school has seen notable improvements in students’ ability to communicate and share their knowledge. Parents are more involved, too, as the students share their digital portfolios and explain what they’ve learned.

Students now arrive early to school to spend their spare time working on the computers. Class projects take half the time as a result of increased computing access and the students’ improved computer skills. “We believe in the NComputing solution,” concluded Mr. Brown. “That’s why I’ve also recommended that we deploy the NComputing solution in our new school being built nearby.”

