Taking the limits off learning

Webster Central School District personalizes learning and empowers students’ and educators’ creativity and innovation.

Organization needs

Webster Central School District sought to meet contemporary skills requirements and provide more relevant, personalized learning, which also required ongoing professional development for educators.

Solutions at a glance

- Client Solutions
  - Dell Chromebook 3180
  - Dell Latitude 13 7380
  - Dell OptiPlex 7040
- Dell EMC Professional Learning for Educators
- Dell EMC TechDirect
- Dell EMC VxRail

Organization results

- Expected to save $200,000 by streamlining IT operations
- Enables personalized learning anywhere, anytime
- Provides every student with continuous access to educational resources
- Delivers real-world learning experiences, transcending classroom boundaries
- Augments teachers’ skills and proficiency with technology

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Brian Neenan
Deputy Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Webster Central School District
In the suburban communities east of Rochester, New York, nearly 750 teachers in the Webster Central School District (CSD) educate approximately 8,400 students in 11 schools. While delivering the best possible education, Webster leadership needs to be flexible to make the best of often unpredictable state budgets and comply with frequently changing operational and reporting requirements. Those conditions add complexity to planning that aims to capitalize on shifts currently underway in the field of K-12 education.

Brian Freeman, assistant superintendent for business at Webster CSD, says, “Change in education can be glacial, so we formed a strategy for three to five years. We wanted to help students acquire essential skills in addition to succeeding academically. We also wanted to personalize education and instill inquiry-based, creative learning. We planned on using modern technology to bring this about. That also meant we could present a growth opportunity to teachers.”

### 1:1 initiative enables personalized learning

When it was time to replace aging HP computers, the school district decided to implement a 1:1 access model by providing students with mobile devices. Conversations with Dell EMC gave Webster leaders the confidence to engage with a new technology provider. “We quickly saw that Dell EMC was fully invested in educational success,” says Brian Zimmer, director of educational technology and information at Webster CSD. “Dell EMC representatives listen to you and your interests are top-of-mind for them. You can always call the Dell EMC team to discuss your concerns and receive powerful support.”

For the student device, Webster chose a Dell Chromebook 3180 with an 11-inch screen, which offered the versatility and robustness to withstand intense use. The 1:1 effort became part of a repeating, three-year technology refresh cycle in which each school has a different focus on students, administrators and teachers. In consecutive school years, administrators and teachers received Dell Latitude 13 7380 laptops. For video production and other tasks that demand high processing power, Webster acquired Dell OptiPlex 7040 desktop computers. The district is also evaluating Dell 70 Interactive Touch Monitors | C7017T in several elementary schools.

Students and educators make extensive use of Google Classroom and other Google tools on the Chromebooks. Students in grades 6 through 12 can take their devices home; in grades 3 through 5, the devices stay in the building. “In our 1:1 initiative, we ensured equity and access to educational content and resources for students by providing them with Dell Chromebooks,” says Brian Neenan, deputy superintendent/assistant superintendent for instruction at Webster CSD. “Learning becomes much more authentic when students can use technology to transcend classroom walls. For instance, students can interview government officials or connect with their high school peers in other countries.”

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Brian Zimmer
Director of Educational Technology and Information, Webster Central School District

Dell EMC
Culture of innovation and continuous learning

In modernizing teaching and learning at Webster, curriculum and technology planners sought to bring about a cultural shift that emphasizes risk-taking and innovation. They went to great lengths to gather feedback and input from students and teachers. Neenan says, “To personalize both student learning and teachers’ professional development, listening to their individual voices is essential. We are in the school buildings all the time, so there is a constant exchange.”

To help educators become comfortable and effective at using technology in their classrooms, Webster partnered with Dell EMC Professional Learning to offer a wealth of learning opportunities. Some of these target small cohorts of teachers who want to augment their skills, others involve teachers and administrators more broadly, and some include savvy students who help teachers get creative with the new tools. “Our math instructor program was so successful, we repeated it,” explains Zimmer. “A Dell EMC team member and Dell EMC Professional Learning for K-12 resources helped make that happen.”

Student-run help desk develop career skills

Student-run help desks in the two Webster high schools deliver an important service and provide a constant flow of feedback and improvement ideas. “When we brought in all the new Chromebooks in our 1:1 project, we promised teachers and staff they would not be tasked with managing them,” says Freeman. “In creating our student-run help desk for that purpose, we had strong backing from Dell EMC TechDirect. We adapted the program for our boot camp and help-desk processes.”

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Joe Montemaro
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Students take a summer course to learn how to repair Chromebooks and gain a Dell EMC certification. In a more in-depth class, they can also become qualified to work on other devices. In addition, they acquire valuable communications and customer service skills. They use a Dell EMC ticketing system to manage the process of repair, replacement loans and returns. The program is highly regarded by the Webster board, students, instructors and visiting school districts. Empowered Webster help-desk team members often pursue technology innovation on their own time. For example, they have created apps and explored new hardware designs. “Help-desk students are on a great path as they go on to college, because Dell EMC qualifications and training unleash their resourcefulness and creativity,” says Joe Montemaro, director of educational technology and information at Webster CSD.

VDI enhances learning, saves $200,000

Webster CSD plans a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) initiative to provide students with even better access to educational applications and resources, no matter where they are or when they want to learn. “Our current personalized desktops take a lot of work to get ready every year, and they still have some access limitations,” says Zimmer. “Virtual desktops can enable continuous learning and will save us close to $200,000 in the first year, using Dell EMC VxRail devices.”