DISTRICT LESSONS:
6 BEST PRACTICES FOR ROLLING OUT YOUR 1-TO-1 PROGRAM

On its second go-around with a 1-to-1 student computing initiative, this Texas district knew exactly how to approach the job.
Making the transition to a fully digital environment is always a challenge. When a school survey at Crowley Independent School District found the number of students using smart devices leapt from 50 percent to 75 percent in just two years, district leaders knew it was time “to meet digital natives where they are.”

When the school system began handing out Dell Latitude 11 Education laptops running Windows at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, parents were as excited as the students. This Texas district was on the second generation of its 1-to-1 program. This time around it knew exactly what to expect and how to approach the job.

This wasn’t simply about choosing the right device and the right platform. It was also about making sure the device provider—Dell EMC—came through with solid consulting help and professional development assistance. This also meant an instructional shift to blended and online learning for personalized education. As the teachers made the digital transition in their classrooms, they knew to expect ample professional learning and acknowledgement for what they’d accomplished.

Crowley ISD has about 15,000 students and in 23 K-12 campuses in and around the city of Fort Worth. In 2013, the district rolled out iPads to 6,700 students in grades 7-12. This past school year, it switched those grades to Windows 10 laptops and moved the tablets it already had to grades K-6 to serve as class sets.

“Honestly, the iPads did a really great job for us. But the students in the secondary grades wanted a few more bells and whistles than we could offer on the iPad,” says Jerry Allen, Crowley ISD’s director of technology and information resources. In this special report, Crowley ISD shares what it has learned about implementing a 1-to-1 program in schools with six best practices for keeping your learning transformation on track.

When Choosing Your Device, Get Everybody’s Input

In its second iteration of a 1-to-1 program, Crowley ISD approached device selection like it has handled textbook adoption in the past. “When you do a textbook adoption, you have to bring teachers to come in and look at the books,” says Allen. “You make it open to the parents to come in. You also take some of your students and give them a couple of choices and say, ‘Which one would you like and tell us why?’”

First, Allen conferred with other chief technology officers and IT directors across the state to get recommendations to pull together a short list of potential computing devices. Then, the district acquired device samples. Among those made available for consideration among educators, parents and students were a new version of the iPad, a Chromebook and several models of Windows-based laptops from a few different vendors.

“They all agreed that the laptop was the way to go,” says Allen. “Once we narrowed that down, we put the laptops in front of them again and they chose the Dell Latitude 11. It was light. It was easy to fit into a backpack. It was durable. It came with great specs as far as the technical aspects. And it worked well with our existing Windows platform.”

What really counted, however, was what the students themselves thought. The technology team handed out devices to a handful of students and requested feedback on what they thought and how they’d use the laptops. “We let them do a lot of the legwork for us,” he says. The results were “beneficial and very real.”

“The students came back with a lot of great feedback,” he says. “We don’t like this model because it’s too big.’ ‘It didn’t fit into our backpacks.’ Or ‘I love this model because I dropped it and the screen didn’t break.’ There’s no sugar-coating it when you hear from students.”

**EXTRA CREDIT**

**THINK EXPANSIVELY**

Allen advises schools to bring in “multiple devices” for evaluation—not just the ones with similar functionality, but also those with widely different specifications, operating systems and look and feel. “Give people a choice. And then once they make the choice, stick with that choice,” he says. “When it’s time to revisit, you’ll know.”
Line Up Software Early in the Process

When Crowley ISD issued the new laptops to their students in August 2015, the computers were outfitted with quick access to the online applications in Microsoft Office 365, providing them with ready availability of online tools for collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity. Each student’s e-mail address and password was already loaded into the district directory service, making the transition to the new devices fast and simple.

The collaboration and learning application suite includes flagships:
- Word
- Excel
- PowerPoint
- Publisher
- Outlook
- OneNote

Alongside the staples are newer apps that have since become mainstays:
- OneDrive, for storing and sharing files
- Sway, for creating and sharing interactive class materials and projects
- Skype, for web conferencing
- Yammer, for collaboration within the school or district
- Delve, for personalized search across Office 365

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Use the Latest

This summer, the district will upgrade all student devices from Windows 7 to Windows 10. Because the district lets students in grades 9, 10 and 11 keep their laptops over the summer, they’ll be invited in a “staged” process to leave their computers with IT for a couple of days in order to upgrade the operating system. Those devices used by students in grades 7, 8 and 12, which have been returned to IT at the end of the school year, will be cleaned up and re-imaged with Windows 10 for distribution in the fall.

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Pick Go-Getters for PL Round One

No matter how excited educators are to take on professional learning, it’s the rare school system that can train everybody at once. At Crowley, which has more than one thousand teachers and 66 administrators, choosing just 50 at start-up wasn’t easy. First, principals were asked to compile a list of the likely candidates. Those teachers were contacted and asked to fill out an application. The criterion was to identify people who could “spark the rest of the campuses to get rolling.” The selection went well, says Allen. “They’re the go-getters. They’re rock stars.”

Teachers also received access to a beta version of Microsoft Office Mix. This lets them record audio and video within PowerPoint for creating interactive lessons—including quizzes—for flipping their classes.

To ensure learning would be available 24/7 the district’s licensing agreement with Microsoft covers using most of the programs on multiple devices. Students can use the software on school computers, home computers and other devices, such as smartphones, whether the hardware was running Windows, Mac, Android or iOS. On top of that, the district has also adopted Blackboard Learn, a learning management system that’s also used by area colleges and universities.

Professional Learning is “Non-negotiable”

Allen is quick to point out device selection is almost the easy part of a 1-to-1 program. Teacher learning is what really makes the difference. “Without the professional [learning] piece, giving the kids a device will turn out to be a distraction in the classroom, as far as the teachers are concerned,” he says. “Until the teachers can see it as an opportunity for [student] learning to continue outside of the classroom, then they will continue to see it as a distraction. So I would say that professional [learning] is non-negotiable.”

Allen negotiated professional learning (PL) from Dell EMC for all the educators—principals and teachers within the school system—as part of the laptop purchase. “For me [PL] was the main part. The device was secondary,” says Allen. “We can hand the students devices all day long. They already know how to use them. But our teachers don’t know how to use them in the classroom appropriately. So even if you’re very adept at technology, there are so many things that come up every single day that can change the way your classroom behaves and reacts. You have to be able to think on the fly.”

Unless the teachers are immersed in the use of technology in the classroom daily, they’re not going to know how to handle the presence of so many devices. Getting solid professional learning was essential. The PL provided by Dell EMC consists of a combination of whole-group training, collaborative teaching and small group reflection.
inside and outside of the classroom. The teachers work in cohorts with a Dell EMC-supplied consultant who comes into the classrooms to model activities and help assess teacher proficiency. That learning experience started in January 2016 with nearly 50 people, including Allen’s team of seven instructional technologists.

In the first year of PL for Dell EMC usage, the pace was slightly too fast, especially the initial two days of PL in January 2016. The purpose of that session was to give the teachers grounding in the use of the devices and to help them decide whether they were up to meeting the expectations of the rest of the program, before the in-class coaching sessions began. In the next go-around, the PL will start in September and be spread out in order to give people more time to develop their skills and experience.

### Recognize Your Teachers for What They’ve Accomplished

When that first corps of Crowley teachers signed on for PL, they were committing to extra work. It’s not easy to develop new skills to better engage students and keep them on task in the classroom while the technology is up and running. When the district began working with Dell EMC to adopt the new Windows-based Latitude 11 for its student devices, part of that discussion focused on how to give recognition to the teachers undertaking the effort.

“Dell really came through,” says Allen. “The company put together an entire certification program. Our teachers will be among the first Dell EMC Certified Educators in the United States. I’m pretty excited about that.”

Certification is earned through a combination of seven on-site consulting days and virtual support over a span of about four to six months. To be considered as Dell EMC-certified educators, teachers must be able to model increased comfort with applying technology in their particular area of inquiry-based learning or in facilitating a student-centered classroom. That requires demonstrating a willingness to try innovative instructional practices in their classrooms and openly collaborate with colleagues.

Crowley ISD will be holding a small graduation ceremony for its newly certified educators. During that event, “graduates” will deliver a brief overview of something they’ve learned.

Likewise, they’ll be eligible for classroom makeovers within budgetary constraints, says Allen. “We’re going to deck out their classrooms with a different look and feel.” That includes putting certified teachers first in line to try out new technology as it enters the district (such as interactive projectors) and outfitting their classrooms with modular and collaboration tables, comfortable seating outfitted with power and networking and other fixings that the teachers have on their wish lists.

Allen is also hoping to entice some of those newly certified experts to consider joining the instructional technology department. “I’d like to grow my own rather than hiring from outside,” he says.

### Share Your Transformation Story

Allen acknowledges the district hasn’t always done the best job of “telling its story” to the community it serves. “I think that’s true with a lot of districts,” he says. “They’re doing great things, but nobody really shows off what they’re doing.”

So that has been a focus for Crowley ISD this year. After all, he notes, a 1-to-1 program is a significant investment. “When you look at the amount of funds you use to purchase laptops, it’s considerable,” he says. “Taxpayers have a right to know the product they’re paying for and that their tax dollars are being used appropriately and that the teachers are engaging in the classroom.”

### Extra Credit

#### DON’T LIMIT CERTIFICATION TO TEACHERS

The new Dell EMC certification program includes credentials for educational leaders and other instructional mentors as well. The first group participates in a combination of seven onsite consulting days and virtual support over four to six months. The second group has 10 days of development work over six to eight months. Both certifications are intended to provide practical insights, best practices that align to the realities of the district or school and independent coaching to increase leadership capacity.
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LET THE STUDENTS BE THE PROOF

Recently, the district held a “tech expo,” to let students show off the technology in use in their schools. Everybody in the community was invited to the 90-minute event. “The kids loved it,” Allen says. “It’s all about the kids showing off what they’ve learned and what they can do.”

For example, the district’s marketing group produced a five-minute video that explains how its schools are integrating technology into the classroom to help students “excel” with their 21st century learning skills. And Crowley’s tech organization has gone social. Its Twitter feed shares photos of teachers and students in the classroom showing technology in action, and its instructional technology blog encourages educators to pick up new skills, new apps or to use the resources they already have in new ways. “We love doing that,” says Allen. “We like showing off.”

Partner with Companies That Understand Education

When the Crowley district chose to partner with Dell EMC, the result “was probably one of the easiest rollouts we have had,” says Allen.

To meet a request by the school board to distribute all student devices in a tight timeframe, the school system turned to Dell EMC-certified experts who provided guidance on how to streamline the computer preparation and deployment processes. “The board wanted it done in two weeks. We handed out nearly 7,000 devices in nine days,” he says. “Dell EMC made it really easy.”

Because Crowley ISD was already a “Windows-based district,” it was using Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager (SCCM) in its data center operations to manage its teacher laptops. It turned to that same technology to speed up student computer imaging, handle endpoint protection and manage application delivery. SCCM also helps out with inventory management of student devices. To protect its students from cyber threats—including web filtering—IT uses SonicWall.

The advantage of shifting to Windows from iPads for the students in higher grades is readily apparent to Allen. Besides helping students do more authentic work and tackle real-life projects with the same applications they’ll be using in college and career, the Windows platform lets IT loosen student confinement. “With Windows devices, we’re able to lock it down but not keep students from having fun as well,” he says. “They can still download music or games for after hours if they choose to, but at the same time we can still control it in the background.”

Plus, that managed openness lets students install device drivers for home printers (made available through an SCCM-created district software center).

Make an Impact on Learning

Now when freshmen enter high school in Crowley ISD, they’re issued a Windows-based Dell laptop intended to serve the entire duration of their high school careers. When they’re done with the devices, they’ll be handed in, refreshed and distributed into the lower grades.

During those four years, what they do with the computing devices will vary from student to student and class to class. One thing is certain: Armed with excellent PL and leadership support, teachers are learning how to deliver interactive teaching and learning in a way that’s engaging the students like little else can. That’s having an impact not just on the learners but on the teachers themselves.

“Without the use of technology in the classroom they probably would have given up the profession because they were so frustrated with trying to get kids’ attention,” says Allen. “I’ve seen teachers that have fully embraced it, and now they don’t know any other way to teach.”

Three Reasons Crowley ISD Chose Windows on Dell Devices

1. The district already had ample experience with managing Windows computers. Adding student devices to the mix was not a major stretch.

2. Dell Latitude 11 laptops work well in technology-infused classrooms to connect USB peripherals, including cameras, projectors, printers, keyboards and mice.

3. By using Microsoft Office 365, the same cloud-based productivity applications in use the workplace, students make an easier transition to college and career.

For more information, visit www.dell.com/k12