



Case study: Orono Public Schools

Location: Orono, Minnesota

Increasing districtwide classroom efficiency

Dual-funded BYOD gives Orono Public Schools an affordable and sustainable 1:1 device solution

Client

The Orono Public School District has a student population of over 2,800 students across four K-12 school buildings. Located in the West-Metro area of Minneapolis, MN, Orono is on a mission to personalize learning for the unlimited success of their students.

Orono takes a multi-pronged approach to this mission, with a key component being their commitment to giving students and teachers access to cutting-edge educational tools. Implementing a BYOD or 1:1 student device program was a top priority. The challenges standing in their way were many, but the tenacity of the technology committee was greater.

"We knew we wanted to get to 1:1, but we couldn't find a fiscally-responsible plan to get us there. When we came across the dual-funded BYOD program from Best Buy Education®, we knew we'd finally found our solution."

-Penny Pease, Technology Integration Coordinator, Orono Public Schools

Challenge

Developing a student device strategy from scratch was to be a serious undertaking for the Orono technology committee. They were faced with the challenge of developing a solution that provided:

- Financial sustainability over the long-term for the school district and their families
- Flexible device assortment at a range of price points
- Streamlined Google Apps For Education programming
- Requirement of students to have a device for school



The committee knew they couldn't afford to purchase a device for every student, so a district-owned and funded 1:1 program was off the table. They also knew requiring families to purchase devices wasn't financially viable for some of their families, so a traditional BYOD program wouldn't work either. Teachers also would have struggled to teach to a wide variety of operating systems.

During almost two years of research and planning, the committee contacted Edina Public Schools (EPS) in Minnesota to learn about their student device program. As one of the first schools in the country to implement a dual-funded BYOD program, the conversation they had with Tim Berndt, EPS Instructional Technology Specialist, was one of the most valuable to their research process.

Solution

Once Orono discovered the dual-funded BYOD program Edina Public Schools had implemented with Best Buy Education, they knew they'd found the exact kind of program they'd been searching for. Led by Penny Pease, Orono's Technology Integration Coordinator, the technology committee worked directly with Dave Donarski, National Account Manager at Best Buy Education.

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Dave helped the committee understand all their options, and make decisions for their own dual-funded BYOD program that met the needs of both the district and their families.

For example, with Dave's help the committee decided they needed student devices, in-school technology support, and a way to recycle old equipment. The committee chose an assortment of five devices that ranged from under \$100 to almost \$1,000. The devices included Acer and Dell Chromebooks, Asus 2-in-1 laptop, Toshiba laptop and a MacBook Air. The savings provided through the dual-funded option also enabled the district to provide devices to families that couldn't afford a device, or that chose not to purchase devices.

In addition to solving all four challenges listed above, Orono's unique solution included a few add-ons:

- In-school Geek Squad® tech support twice per week for any student device (not just BYOD devices)
- Tech trade-in program that gave Orono credit toward their BYOD devices, and provided responsible recycling for their old tech
- A custom, co-branded self-service website for families to choose and order their device
- Continued support from their Best Buy Education® Account Manager

Implementation

To ensure that the program implementation was easy to understand and inclusive, Orono created a communication plan that used e-mails, direct mailers, videos, and parent meetings attended by their Best Buy Education Account Manager to walk everyone through the solution.

The process itself looks like this:

- Custom e-procurement site was created for Orono PS
- Families are given a voucher to shop devices on the site
- Once the voucher code is entered, the discounted price of the device is reflected
- Families pay the balance
- Best Buy® delivers the devices to the school and hands them out to the families on a designated evening

The original plan was to roll out the program in phases over the course of three years, starting with the ninth grade. Orono teachers expressed an urgency to get the devices in their classrooms faster, so the committee worked with Dave to redesign the plan within the flexibility of a dual-funded BYOD program, to have a two-year roll-out instead.

To help support the influx of new devices into the schools, Orono decided to add a Geek Squad Services package to their solution. Agents provide on-campus device support in both the middle and high schools based on the times and days that work best for their population throughout the year. They perform level-1 technical support on any device for which the students and faculty need assistance.

"Technology has completely transformed how I work with kids. I know my students so much more now than I ever did before."

- Cindy Conger, Gifted and Talented Teacher,
Orono Public Schools

Long-term relationship

Since Orono Public Schools launched their dual-funded BYOD initiative in 2015, the faculty have gone on to share their stories about how technology has transformed the way their students learn and teachers teach in a series of videos. Penny Pease has partnered with Best Buy Education on multiple occasions to share the process and success of her program through webinars, podcasts and tradeshow presentations.

Dave Donarski and other Best Buy Education staff continue to support Orono Public Schools as student devices are integrated into the school day and the schools' network infrastructure. The flexible Services relationship with Geek Squad will continue for as long as Orono needs it.

The goal of having a continuing relationship with the schools we serve is to ensure that technology becomes a seamless, supported component of the school day for our customers. Best Buy Education doesn't sell boxes of products, we help schools develop long-term solutions to the technology challenges they face today, and will face in the years to come.