

Case study: Edina Public Schools

Location: Edina, Minnesota

Renewing the Education Experience:

Personal learning devices and Geek Squad® support services in Edina Public Schools

“This partnership is so unique and so innovative. It was so successful, with the pilot program last year, that families are inquiring if they can buy more devices—teachers too.”

- Tim Berndt, Instructional Technology Specialist, Edina Public Schools



The client

Edina Public Schools is a public school district serving approximately 8400 students in the Minneapolis, Minnesota suburb of Edina. The school system is committed to promoting innovative educational experiences for all students, and one of their key areas for development focuses on the best way to incorporate technology into the learning process— both inside the classroom and out.

Many schools around the country select a particular device they want all students to use, but Edina chose to embrace the BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) movement. They wanted to give students choice and a sense of ownership. Some students were already using laptops, tablets or smartphones at home and in class, so it didn't make sense to force them to use a different device at school. Edina previously piloted a program in which student were provided a specific laptop, but results of the program did not justify its expansion.

The challenge

Adopting a BYOD practice presented many challenges for students, faculty and staff. Edina wanted to be sure students had the opportunity to have their own device of choice at an affordable price; teachers were able to develop device-neutral lessons and manage how and when devices would be used in their classes; and, everyone would need training and technical assistance to ensure success. In addition, the district needed to address a variety of security concerns.

The solution

In 2012, Edina Public Schools entered into a unique partnership with Best Buy and launched the eLearning² pilot initiative with ninth-grade students at South View and Valley View Middle Schools.

eLearning² operates on the premise that great teachers and personal technology will take learning to the next level and better prepare students for the future. Learning can be more student-driven, customized to their needs, and occur both in school and at home with the help of personal technology devices.

Tim Berndt, Instructional Technology Specialist with Edina Public Schools, worked with Patrick Ralston, Sr. Account Executive at Best Buy, to decide on the best devices to offer at discounted pricing. Devices included the Samsung Tablet 2 and Galaxy Note 8.0, the Samsung Chromebook, Acer Ultrabook and Toshiba Satellite notebook. Families had the option to purchase these devices through a custom, co-branded website.

Overall, Tim was happy with the solution, saying, “There’s choice. The families can choose the device that best fits the learning style of the student. Our students and families have the opportunity to buy a learning device at a very aggressive price.”



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The implementation

But the devices were only part of the solution. There were training and support issues that needed to be addressed. Patrick Ralston enlisted the help of Geek Squad® from Best Buy®, with Chris Olson taking the lead.

Trainings sessions were set up for students and faculty, and information nights were scheduled for families to learn more about the eLearning² initiative, devices and support.



Patrick explained, “Once we get the opportunity to show the benefits, kids love it because they get to own their own device. It’s thinking a little bit differently than just selling a computer to a school. We’re seeing results that are exceeding well past our expectations.”

“It gives technology to families that couldn’t afford it before. And then also, Edina is saving money to apply to other programs.”

A service agreement was also negotiated. When students and teachers started using their new devices, Geek Squad was there to offer tech support, and they continue to have Agents present on a regular basis to assist.

“We’ve implemented Geek Squad services in school. They’re actually in the schools two times a week for two hours a day, helping students with basic troubleshooting, any questions, and they work with any device. In turn, with the relationship we’ve built with Edina, it allows us to discount product for the students.”



The continuing relationship

In 2013, the eLearning² initiative expanded to include sixth- and ninth-grade students and is proving to be a success. Plans are now underway for the program to be extended to other grades as well. Thus far, over 1,275 devices have been purchased by Edina families.

In January, 2014, the partnership launched a Geek Squad internship program, an opportunity for Edina middle school and high school students to become junior Geek Squad Agents. The eight-week course meets every Wednesday after school at South View Middle School. Students learn to diagnose, problem solve and fix basic computer issues. The course is designed for students with a strong interest in computer repair and technology. Students who complete the training earn certification to be considered an official junior Geek Squad Agent.

Since the launch of eLearning², more than 200 other school districts from around the country have inquired about the initiative and Edina’s partnership with Best Buy, expressing interest in similar arrangements to enhance curriculum for their students.

Gregg Forsberg, Vice President, Best Buy Education, stated, “We see huge opportunities as education evolves and more and more students are using tablets and laptops. It’s a wonderful complement of Best Buy Education and Geek Squad in a portfolio of product for these schools.”

