SHARP

Sharp Provides High-Tech Solutions for McCormick County School District

Updated equipment and a new IT infrastructure from Sharp streamlined spending and helped ensure the future of a great education for the students of McCormick County School District.

Business Environment Challenges

Nestled along South Carolina's picturesque Freshwater Coast, McCormick County is known as a destination for camping, golfing, boating, hiking and other relaxing activities. Despite its rural setting, McCormick County School District (MCSD) maintains the goal to provide approximately 700 students with an education experience comparable to metropolitan schools.

The district was focused on keeping its competitive edge, but with no IT director or data backup and recovery system in place, MCSD's technology assets were quickly falling behind other area schools. The school district was equipped with printers from three different vendors without a system in place to evaluate toner usage and when a printer would malfunction, it could take several days before it was repaired. Also, because equipment was bought piecemeal whenever needed, the district wasn't able to properly track its printing expenses. In fact, an audit commissioned by interim superintendent Betty Bagley showed that the school's technology challenges were bringing expenses well over budget.

Industry
Education

Organization
McCormick County School District (MCSD)

Challenges
- An internal audit revealed the school was over budget.
- There was no tracking of equipment expenses or costly color print jobs.
- Equipment around campus was from a variety of vendors with no IT support.

Solutions
- Managed IT solutions from Sharp including backup & disaster recovery and help desk.
- Eight Sharp MFPs and MICAS were brought in to standardize equipment and costs.
- 70 Sharp AQUOS BOARD interactive displays to boost student collaboration.
- Digital signage installed around campus for better communication with Sharp professional displays.
- 20 cameras to improve security and facilitate learning outside of the classroom.

Results
- Streamlined approach to equipment management to help reduce costs, minimize downtime and get service faster.
- Better classroom and meeting collaboration
- Remote learning
- Enhanced service

Business Technology Solutions

The first part of fixing the issue was to use one, reliable equipment manufacturer as an alternative to having multiple vendors with separate service contracts. Sharp installed eight Advanced Series workgroup document systems to meet a variety of needs (two color models and six monochrome models).

MICAS, a cloud-based MFP management software from Sharp, helped school staff track each machine's usage for cost efficiency. Color MFPs defaulted to black and white printing to ensure toner savings unless color was absolutely needed.

Sharp also installed sixty-five 70" Class (69.5" diagonal) AQUOS BOARD® interactive display systems to enhance classroom learning and help keep all students engaged. The displays are mounted in each classroom, plus some can be wheeled into conference rooms. For example, when parents meet with teachers, the child's information can now be easily viewed on a large screen.

Five smaller interactive displays were used to create huddle spaces. The 40" Class (39.5" diagonal) interactive displays help students communicate and collaborate with students in other towns and countries for research and other projects.

In addition, five Sharp professional displays were installed to broadcast important information and positive messaging.

Sharp Virtual CIO Brian Green, who works in a local Sharp branch and had network engineering knowledge, served as an IT consultant until MCSD was able to hire a full-time IT director. Sharp implemented managed IT services including backup and disaster recovery for two servers and help desk support that will get a technician to the school in hours instead of days, minimizing downtime. Sharp also installed 20 third-party cameras around the school, not just for added perimeter security but also to use with the interactive displays in the classrooms.

"The Sharp representatives were never pushy," Betty explained. "After bringing the printers in, I informed them about our technology needs. They offered to look at our servers and network system and see what they could do to help us. They went above and beyond to help us as well as other vendors. For example, the district had a gate installed and Sharp helped to make sure the vendor wasn't duplicating wires or other unnecessary materials so we weren't wasting money. In addition, Brian helped me review resumes to find the right individual for our IT director job since he knew exactly what the school system should look for."
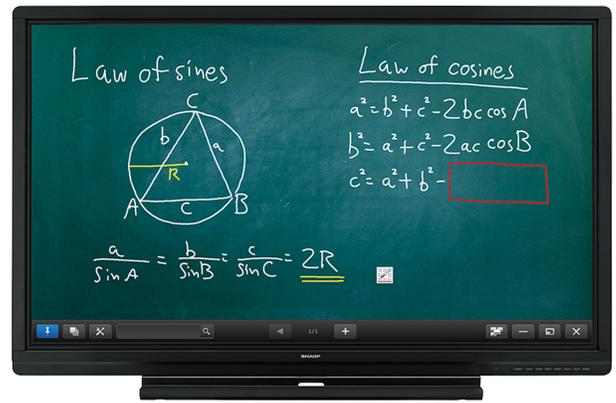
Innovative Results

All four schools in the system are on the new network, including a high school, middle school, elementary school and preschool center. Now, whenever equipment needs service, Sharp representatives can be there within a few hours instead of waiting for days. Answers to IT related questions can be given instantly as Sharp can remotely check the system. Additionally, a robust backup and disaster recovery service helps to minimize downtime and data loss in case of an emergency.

Because the Sharp MFPs toner and supplies now have standardized costs throughout, the district is better able to track its spend, which translates into significant dollar savings. School district employees have a PIN code, which allows the MCSD to track user printing. Using MICAS, efficiency is also increased when toner is ordered from Sharp because the package lists the device's identification number so that school department staff members know exactly where the toner belongs on campus.

With third-party solutions including cameras and WePresent® wireless presentation systems connected to the AQUOS BOARD interactive displays, students can now learn remotely. For example, in-school suspensions can be held in a separate room so that students won't miss out on their education. Google Classroom is also used with interactive displays to help students and teachers organize assignments, boost collaboration and foster better communication.

The MCSD is now saving money but, according to Betty, it is the service that has been of immeasurable value.

"You can't put a dollar amount on time saved and helpfulness," says Betty. "Sharp understands our mission. It's been a wonderful partnership and a trusted relationship. And, it's an illustration of how the private and public sector can work together for the betterment of children."