

CASE STUDY

FUJITSU TABLET PCS MAKE THE GRADE AT ST. JOSEPH'S ACADEMY

"ONE OF ST. JOSEPH'S MISSIONS IS TO PREPARE OUR GIRLS TO BECOME WOMEN OF THE FUTURE. THEY WILL FACE PROBLEMS IN COLLEGE AND THE WORKPLACE BUT TECHNOLOGY WILL BE THE TOOL THEY NEED TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS."

Linda Harvison, Principal, St. Joseph's Academy



THE CUSTOMER:

St. Joseph's Academy is a secondary school for girls owned and operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph and staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph and dedicated laypersons. Primarily a college preparatory school, St. Joseph's strives for high standards of excellence in its academic program and its religious orientation within the Catholic tradition.

THE PROJECT:

Make sure the right technology is in place that is capable enough to keep up with the demands of staff and students.

THE SOLUTION:

After evaluating the alternatives, the Fujitsu LifeBook® T-Series Tablet PC came out on top with good battery life, a fast processor, multi-touch capability, built-in webcam, high reliability, and a rotating screen.

St. Joseph's Academy has a commitment to technology that is fused into the school, staff, and everyday lives of the students. The school has a strong vision for how it wants to use technology to help students academically and also prepare them for the future. Ten years ago, the entire curriculum was rewritten to incorporate modern learning tools such as digital multimedia, computers, and social media. Students have access to full multimedia labs to produce high quality video, audio podcasts, and work with interactive white boards. Web mastering students have assisted corporate clients across the city with their web design projects. The school also offers classes such as computer applications, networking, animation and film along with the normal course load.

This exposure to technology has also helped many students land jobs while still in school or after they leave St. Joseph's. It's very common to see a St. Joseph's student setting up computer networks or solving technical problems for a local business. Even former students of the school have moved on to excel in technology-centric careers that they credit from the time spent at St. Joseph's. One of the crown jewels at the school is its student-run help desk, which takes care of repairs and maintenance of equipment. Student workers are trained on hardware components and software issues; performing hands on repairs to many of the devices that come in the shop. The students that work at the help desk have an extra advantage of learning skills that they can take with them outside of the classroom. "One of St. Joseph's missions is to prepare our girls to become women of the future. They will face problems in college and the workplace but technology will be the tool they need to solve these problems," says Linda Harvison, Principal at St. Joseph's Academy.

CHALLENGE

The challenge the school faced was making sure it had the right technology in place capable enough to keep up with the demands of their staff and students. Their 1 to 1 laptop program, which places a laptop in the hands of every student, was at a turning point.

"Our program has utilized laptops for the past eight years but we needed something that was more reliable, speedy, and capable of performing the tasks at hand in the classroom," explains John Richardson, IT Director at the school. From a technology standpoint, one of their main challenges was to find the right equipment that would be the perfect fit.



A committee was formed comprised of teachers, parents, students, administrators, and board members. The goal was to evaluate different equipment and select a device that would be used for everything from real-time collaboration in the classroom to video conferencing on the go. "Because our school is really student focused, the majority of the decision on which product to purchase came from the students," explained Mr. Richardson. The committee meetings were led by students, the bulk of the questions about the products' capabilities came from the students, and they also got one-on-one time to test out different models.

SOLUTION

After evaluating the alternatives, the Fujitsu LifeBook® T-Series Tablet PC came out on top for several reasons.

"Our ultimate goal was to find a tablet PC that had a good amount of battery life, a fast processor, capable of multi-touch, and had built in webcams," says Mr. Richardson.

Mrs. Harvison summed up why they were looking for these specifics when saying, "We didn't want these features because they were the latest and greatest but because we had specific uses for them in the classroom."

BENEFIT

The different types of technology that Mrs. Harvison refers to include a multi-touch screen, 3 GB of RAM, an Intel® Calpella chipset, a rotating LCD screen, 160 GB of hard drive space, and Microsoft® Windows® 7. One the most useful features is the hard drive-based 3D accelerometer, which can detect if the notebook is falling and activates mechanisms that retract the drive heads helping to prevent the loss or damage of valuable data on the computer. "Students are really excited about the tablet PC because it wraps up all these different types of technology into a great package and I think it will bring communication at the Academy to a whole new level," says Idil Acar, a student at St. Joseph's.

The battery is also a key feature, giving the students approximately 5 hours of computing time. This is essential because students use their tablets throughout each class period. The Fujitsu LifeBook T-series gave the students the horsepower they needed to work with things such as video editing and the durability to handle the wear and tear of a school day. "Years ago, schools gave students a pencil and a paper tablet and told them to make use of it. At St. Joseph's we're giving our students an electronic tablet coupled with technology to give them modern tools to aid them with their schoolwork," says Mrs. Harvison.

Not only are the students at St. Joseph's using the tablets to their fullest potential but the teachers are also finding new methods of teaching course work through the use of technology.

Chemistry and physics teachers are able to use the multi-touch feature on the tablets for hands on projects dealing with chemical reactions and problem solving equations.

Students in geometry classes are able to use the stylus and sketch pad feature on the tablet to solve problems with geometric shapes.

Teachers are able to use a combination of the tablet PC and Moodle, an open source online course management program to facilitate the posting of assignments, taking tests, and uploading work.

DyKnow™ is used throughout the classroom for a collaborative learning experience with the tablets, giving the teacher the ability to display information on every student's device simultaneously. Students are also able to show work from their tablets on the teacher's board, making the classroom time very interactive.

The integrated web cameras have also proved to be useful allowing sick students to video-conference into class when they are out or share discussion time with another classroom across the country.

The students at St. Joseph's have not only been equipped with tablet PC's that will help them academically but they are getting a head start by preparing them for what's in store for college and the professional world. "We want our girls to go into college and the workplace having already mastered these tools," explains Mrs. Harvison. St. Joseph's Academy is truly a 21st century school, using modern technology in the classrooms to help their students achieve academic excellence.

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