

PROFILE

NAME: Downingtown Area School District
LOCATION: Downingtown, PA
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS: 2012
NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 13,000
WEBSITE: www.dasd.org

CHALLENGE

While implementing a districtwide 1:1 device initiative, Downingtown Area School District realized schools needed classroom technologies that better supported student devices while giving educators the flexibility and reliability needed for instruction. Determining which classroom display would work best for their needs was top of mind.

SOLUTION

The district surveyed teachers and tested several classroom technologies to determine which would be the best fit throughout the district. Ultimately, the district chose Epson BrightLink® interactive displays because of their flexibility to be used with a variety of educational software, their compatibility with teacher and student devices, and the large, bright image they offer classrooms.

Technology Supporting Today's Learning Environments

Downingtown Area School District, located in the heart of Chester County, Pennsylvania, is the seventh largest district in the state. With 16 school buildings and one cyber school, the district serves a diverse population of more than 13,000 students.

While its longstanding practice supported principals and assistant principals determining what technology their school needed, the district wanted to find a way to ensure every student had the same learning opportunities. It looked into different ideas and potential programs to support this goal. At the start of the 2011 school year, the district implemented a 1:1 student device initiative to help create more student engagement and provide every student with the same learning environment.

As the device roll out expanded, the district found certain devices were a better fit for specific grade levels and incorporated this into its initiative. For example, the district found iPads to be the best solution for earlier grades, whereas a two-in-one device that converted to a tablet was more suitable for later grades. Once students had their devices, district leaders realized they needed to update the classroom technology so both teachers and students had access to the technologies.

Finding the Perfect Fit

Before the district chose its classroom technology, it provided teachers with the opportunity to evaluate various options. It was important for the district to receive feedback from teachers during the process, because teachers are the ones using the technology and have the best understanding of how it will be utilized.

When it came to classroom displays, some of the top priorities among teachers included high brightness, image quality, and flexibility. The district provided interactive flat panels and Epson BrightLink Interactive Displays for teachers to test. With teacher buy-in, the district determined that the BrightLink displays were the best fit for their classrooms. With the BrightLink, an image can be projected on a classroom whiteboard or any light wall or surface. And, because of the large, bright image size, a teacher can project multiple student screens for collaborative and peer work.

"BrightLink displays give teachers the maximum level of flexibility.



They are able to maximize the size of an image in spaces whether there's a whiteboard to project on, or just a wall," said Kevin Parks, former media and educational technology coordinator for Downingtown Area School District. "Teachers can project a full 100-inch image ensuring every student, including the ones in the back row, can see it."

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Implementing Technology and Supporting Teachers

The process wasn't over once the technology was selected. The district needed to create a plan outlining which schools would get to implement the technology each year and map out the budget for this initiative. Scheduling technology on a staggered basis helped the district control both finances and manpower for the installation process.

When updating the high schools, for example, the district planned it in two phases, since those buildings are much bigger than the elementary and middle school buildings. This "per building" model helped the district spread the cost over multiple years, while also ensuring students in the same grade in the district have the same environments in which to learn.

Once the classrooms were updated and renovated, the district worked to ensure teachers were both aware of the technology and they were prepared to utilize it. For example, if the technology was installed on a Friday, teachers would have received emails with training information, such as Epson's BrightLink how-to videos, by the following Monday. Additionally, instructional coaches throughout the district were available to support teachers as they adjusted to new or updated technologies in their classrooms.

As teachers started using Epson BrightLink displays in their classrooms, they noticed big differences. "Teachers are able to maximize the size of the images," said Parks. "It's bright, sharp, and just an overall flexible solution. Teachers can decide what works best for them whether that's projecting content or using whiteboard space, and it really allows them to have the best of both worlds."

"The pandemic changed our approach and has really shown us what our priorities are," said Parks. "Having a flexible classroom display that easily adjusts to the learning environment has been very beneficial."



Standardizing on One Display Technology

While some of the classrooms in the district had BrightLink displays prior to this initiative, standardizing on one technology makes the teaching and learning experience equitable for both students and teachers. Teachers and students can change classrooms without having to relearn the technology since they are already familiar with the solutions.

The Epson BrightLink laser technology has a virtually maintenance free 20,000-hour laser light source¹, which eliminates the need to purchase and replace lamps. "We're hoping to get to the point where every BrightLink in our buildings is laser-based," said Parks. "Those are a big game changer." And, he added, "One of the great things about when we update the displays is that Epson kept the mounting brackets consistent. It helps our district save money and time with the wiring and structure already there and makes it a much easier project."

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The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the individuals. Individuals were not compensated for this article.

¹No required maintenance for the light source for up to 20,000 hours. Approximate time until brightness decreases 50% from first usage. Measured by acceleration test assuming use of 0.04 - 0.20 mg/m³ of particulate matter. Time varies depending on usage conditions and environment. Replacement of parts other than the light source may be required in a shorter period..

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