# River Dell Regional School District

## The right focus in 1:1 technology delivers increased learning

**Industry**
K-12 education

**Objective**
Support a learner-focused 1:1 technology program with highly flexible, reliable computers

**Approach**
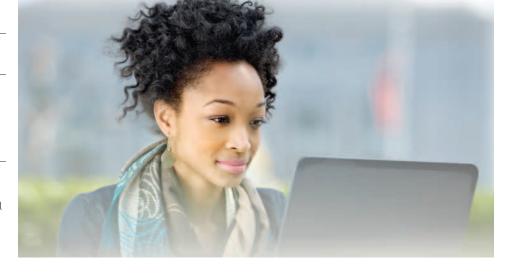Deploy HP EliteBook Folio Notebook PCs

**IT matters**
- Integration of digital tools enables students to create content both locally and online
- Participation in HP Self-Maintainer Program speeds service and maintenance, reducing costs

**Business matters**
- Increased student engagement
- Migration to a learner-centered educational model
- Collaboration across all curricular areas
- High student achievement—99% graduation rate, 94% college matriculation rate
- Access to HP educational strategist for development of goals and roadmap to the future

**"Access to an HP educational strategist helped us focus our goals on improving teaching and learning through technology."**

— Marianthe Williams, director of technology, River Dell Regional School District, Bergen County, N.J.

When River Dell Regional School District in New Jersey set out to improve its 1:1 technology program, it began with collaborative planning involving all stakeholders, including its HP representative. Access to an HP educational strategist helped the district focus its goals on improving teaching and learning through technology, according to technology director Marianthe Williams. Williams says the program has increased student engagement and enthusiasm about the educational process. In 2012, the district was named to Newsweek magazine's list of America's Best High Schools.

When Marianthe Williams joined the River Dell Regional School District in New Jersey as its director of technology, she knew the district had an excellent reputation for quality. It also had the opportunity to help students achieve even more with the help of technology.

Like many school districts, River Dell had launched a 1:1 technology program to put computers in the hands of every high school student. The question was, how could the River Dell community continue to move forward? How could it apply technology to do a better job of motivating teachers, engaging students, and putting learning first among a competing set of priorities?

Williams didn't claim to have all the answers. But she knew that between superintendent, administrators, board of education, teachers, and the technology team, there were plenty of good ideas around. So she resolved to fine-tune the 1:1 program with a focus on collaborative planning, professional development for teachers, and a learner-centered model for student education.

"Our district goals are developed collaboratively with administration and teachers," she explains. "The technology goals go beyond simply supplying a sophisticated technology environment; they focus on teaching, learning and student achievement."

## Becoming a 21st Century School District

River Dell is a regional school district serving students in grades 7 through 12 from the communities of Oradell and River Edge in Bergen County, New Jersey.

The 1:1 technology program is part of a commitment to creating what Williams calls a 21st century digital school district. "The successful integration and use of technology continues to make a profound impact on education in our district's schools," she says.

The hallmarks of River Dell's 1:1 technology program include:

- Integration of digital tools with content creation

- Migration to a learner-centered educational model

- Collaboration across all curricular areas

- Professional development support for faculty and staff

The results are clear. In 2012, the district was named to Newsweek magazine's list of America's Best High Schools, based largely on its 99% graduation rate, 94% rate of college matriculation, and average SAT scores of 1591.

"We feel the ongoing commitment to a 21st century digital school district has resulted in increased student engagement and enthusiasm about the educational process, which has clearly, and positively, impacted learning," Williams says.

## Collaboration with stakeholders includes HP

Williams says the first step in refocusing the program with collaborative planning was to build a shared vision with all stakeholders.

"One of the first things I wanted to do was bring all our stakeholders to the table to share an assessment of the 1:1 technology project, so that we could move forward together with expert guidance regarding devices, infrastructure and educational resources and most importantly, professional development to support teaching and learning," she says. "Technology is something that always needs attention in an educational setting, and the conversation needs to be ongoing, with all stakeholders present."

HP became involved with the 1:1 program when Williams first joined River Dell's technology team six years ago. Ever since then, the company's educational technology experts have contributed to shaping the 1:1 program.

"Access to an HP educational strategist helped us focus our goals on improving teaching and learning through technology," Williams says.

To support the digital learning environment, River Dell provides all teachers and students in the high school with their own individual, district-issued HP notebook computer.

The newest generation of devices in the schools is the HP EliteBook Folio Notebook PC, one of the new class of Intel-based Ultrabook PCs, which was selected by a committee of both teachers and students from among more than two dozen devices. It combines powerful computing with long battery life[1] and light weight.

Standardizing on a single model simplifies deployment and support. River Dell is also

# Creating a culture of innovation, support key to success

part of the HP Self-Maintainer Program, which enables the HP trained district staff to perform ongoing maintenance. Participation and qualification in this program helps the district reduce its costs and ensure rapid service turnaround for students.

## Migrating to a learner-centered model

HP technology at River Dell impacts both the way teachers approach teaching, and the way students approach learning. Students have access to a variety of e-learning opportunities, are able to communicate digitally with their teachers and with each other, and to personalize their learning style through individualized technology access.

A key difference in River Dell's application of technology is that the district has embraced a learner-centered model. As a result, students create content in a variety of ways that wouldn't be possible otherwise, both locally and online. And they can do so anywhere, anytime—both in and out of school. Teachers post assignments, links and other information for students and parents alike to access from home—or wherever they have Internet access.

"The 1:1 program is not about the device, it's about the learning," Williams explains. "Our students have engaging, empowering learning experiences both in and out of school that prepare them to be active, creative, knowledgeable and ethical participants in our globally networked society."

Students are prepared for life beyond high school because HP technology and software tools used in the schools mirror the kind of technology they will encounter in the future.

The district also leverages the power of technology to measure what matters in education, and to use assessment data for continuous improvement. The district administers MAP benchmark tests to start the academic year in order to establish a baseline, then again mid-year and at the close of the year to track progress.

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– Marianthe Williams, director of technology, River Dell Regional School District

Williams points out that migrating to a learner-centered digital school was not an event, but a continuing series of small, incremental changes. "You can't simply create a dynamic digital learning environment overnight. It takes time to influence and equip teachers, to build the necessary infrastructure, and to change the thinking of students."

Research shows that employing technology increases engagement, and engagement leads to mastery, asserts Williams. "Students become engaged in exploring resources, creating their own content and manipulating data instead of simply taking notes in class."

## Customer at a glance

**Application**
1:1 technology program for K-12 environment

**Hardware**
• HP EliteBook Folio Notebook PC

**Software**
• Windows® 7
• Turnitin
• Dropbox
• DyKnow

**HP services**
• HP Self-Maintainer Program

## Professional faculty development

In many early K-12 1:1 technology programs, the focus was more on computers than on learning. Often overlooked in such initiatives was the role of professional learning opportunities for the faculty, Williams says.

River Dell's program, on the other hand, treats faculty development as a foundational element. Professional development isn't treated simply as a top-down initiative; instead, the district has created a team of teachers to mentor and coach colleagues.

> "Ongoing commitment to a 21st century digital school district has resulted in increased student engagement and enthusiasm about the educational process, which has clearly, and positively, impacted learning."
>
> – Marianthe Williams, director of technology, River Dell Regional School District

"Teachers assess the needs of the members of their departments and develop relevant workshops to meet the needs of each colleague," Williams explains. "The fact that teachers are driving professional development in each content area ensures that workshops are meaningful and differentiated."

That does not mean administrators are left out. The superintendent and building administrators attend the same sessions with the teachers and lead by example, which has helped to change the culture. Everyone respects the need for continuing professional development.

In addition to workshops and meetings, the district also offers on-demand learning environments, so teachers can review material that has been presented to everyone.

The biggest key, Williams says: create a culture of innovation and support. "When teachers are supported they can move out of their comfort zone without worrying about failure. They leap ahead instead of worrying about falling back."

## Looking ahead

Williams continually reminds people, both in her district and outside it, that change is a process, not an event. Part of that process is stopping to celebrate the successes of teachers and students now and then, she says.

She continues to share and articulate the district's vision of creating a culture and environment that helps students learn anytime, anywhere—and enables them to continue learning that way long after they leave the River Dell district. She hopes to expand the 1:1 program to include all middle school grades in the coming years.

Fulfilling the vision of becoming a 21st century school district is, likewise, an ongoing process. Williams has ongoing discussions with teachers, teacher trainers, administrators and technology experts—including the district's HP experts—to assess where the district is on the journey, where it needs to go next, and how to get there.

"We're on a long, long journey," she says. "We're fortunate to have collaborators like HP on the road with us."

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