

A Texas District Uses Software to Keep Focus on Learning

NetSupport School is classroom management software that liberates the computer lab

Some things are just meant to roam free, like chickens in a farmyard. But students in a computer lab? Take 30-45 students, sit them in front of unmonitored computers, and you get a free-range social club and an Internet café—not a classroom.

That was exactly what was concerning San Angelo ISD, a district of 24 schools located in West Central Texas that serves over 13,000 Pre-K12 students. In 2002, the district began using NetSupport School to monitor usage on its computers. The result was that students quickly turned their focus on instruction rather than their social lives.

NetSupport School is classroom management software that allows teachers to monitor all students from one central screen. It was designed to enhance the teaching process by allowing more one-to-one instruction, which, in turn, increases student proficiency and encourages better student participation. Educators monitor each student's computer, and if necessary, take control of that PC. Teachers can exhibit their own screen onto students' computers to help demonstrate a particular application or to navigate through a website.

As with any software, simplicity of use is essential. Scott Mitchell is a computer technician in the San Angelo district. "It's easy enough for anybody to use...the teachers love it," he said. "All of our experiences have been positive. We started off in 2002 with about 250 licenses and now have over a 1,000."

As the technician in charge of making sure the district's IT infrastructure is performing properly, Mitchell says he's pleased. "It runs quite reliably. Once NetSupport is set up, it requires very little attention. If [I] reimaged a computer...I do it remotely and it usually takes less than five minutes." NetSupport School allows considerable flexibility in setting up a computer lab, making it quick and easy for the tech group. "At times, I have performed deployments from my office without visiting the classroom," said Mitchell.

NetSupport School provides controlling features that monitor applications used, Internet sites visited, the printing activity of each student and IM usage, as well as full multimedia testing and instant surveys.

A unique attribute is NetSupport's Student Journal feature. During a typical class, all items relating to the subject—teacher and student notes, lesson details, URLs used during the lesson, classroom presentations, graphics and more—are automatically included in a PDF file for post-lesson review by the student. This feature allows the teacher to store a comprehensive digital record of the day's work.

Real-time audio monitoring allows teachers to know what students are listening to through their headphones or what's being said into their microphone. If needed, the teacher can conduct a two-way chat with individual students without disrupting the rest of the class. Important points and details can be recorded for playback to the individual student or broadcast to the rest of the class.

Mitchell says that the Internet locking feature gets considerable use. "After setting NetSupport up with new teachers, I usually help them get started and give them a few pointers to get them going. Their first reaction is always amazement and they certainly feel empowered, especially after locking down the Internet."

What's most important is complete customer satisfaction. "All our users are very pleased with NetSupport School," said Mitchell. "Many have become experts with it and take advantage of all the features. The testimonies from the teachers are always positive and many repeatedly tell me they could not do without it."

For more information, please visit www.netsupportschool.com or call (888) 665-0808.

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