

# ALVARADO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

HP Mini PC helps launch 1:1 technology program



Alvarado  
Independent  
School  
District

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—Kyle Berger, executive director of technology services, Alvarado Independent School District, Texas

**HP customer case study:** Choosing HP Mini PCs helps Texas school system stretch funding, begin 1:1 program

**Industry:** Education

### Objective:

Provide 1:1 technology to K-12 students

### Approach:

Alvarado ISD has deployed HP Mini PCs to every fifth and sixth grade student, and will expand to fourth grade next

### Improvements:

- More collaborative, interactive learning
- Greater student involvement



The value of a 1:1 technology program—in which every student is guaranteed access to his or her own computer in the classroom—has been proven over and over in recent years. But in many economically disadvantaged school districts, the promise has remained out of reach due to lack of funding.

At Alvarado Independent School District (AISD) in Texas, the HP Mini PC has helped to extend the district’s reach. As the district prepared to open its new intermediate school for fourth, fifth and sixth graders, the technology plan was to equip each classroom with 10-15 PCs. But Kyle Berger, executive director of technology services for the district, found that the budget would enable the district to purchase a Mini PC for every fifth and sixth grader. At last, his vision of implementing technology 1:1 could become a reality.

# Customer solution at a glance

## Primary applications

1:1 technology in K-12 classes

## Primary hardware

- HP 2133 Mini-Note PCs
- HP 2140 Mini-Note PCs

## Primary software

- Genuine Windows® XP Home
- Microsoft® Office
- Skyward Student Management Suite
- DyKnow Monitor
- DyKnow Vision
- Orchard
- Inspiration

## HP Services

- Training
- Self-Maintainer Program

“It was an amazing moment for AISD,” says Berger. “The HP Mini PC fulfills our need for a netbook with a good price point matched with good capability. After years of waiting for the right technology, we finally launched our 1:1 program. We couldn’t have done it without HP.”

## Technology untethered, in every student’s hands

Alvarado ISD, located 30 miles southwest of Dallas, serves more than 3,200 students, of whom more than 70% are economically disadvantaged. When Berger arrived, he found that most classrooms had two to four wired desktop PCs sitting in the corner. “I wanted to untether technology from the corner of the room,” he says. “We want to facilitate the use of technology as a tool for learning. We believe that technology can accelerate student knowledge and that effectively using technology tools can help drive student academic success.”

The district started by moving toward the purchase of notebook PCs rather than wired desktops a few years prior for student use. It also added mounted digital projectors, document cameras and interactive whiteboards, so that teachers would at least have technology tools to spark enthusiasm in the classroom.

The real breakthrough came when the district launched 1:1 technology in the fifth and sixth grades. “A fifth grade teacher I know told me once he had to change his teaching method several times each hour to keep his students interested. But now he’s found that with the notebook PCs, students remain engaged. He was shocked he didn’t have to keep switching the way he was teaching the class. He could concentrate on the subject instead of trying to keep the students engaged,” Berger says.

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Every student in the district has a network account with storage that gives them a place to begin building a digital portfolio of all their work. Teachers use Skyward Student Management Suite software along with DyKnow to leverage the power of the netbooks by

posting notes or assignments for the day on the network, or even straight to the students’ laptops using DyKnow Vision software. Students can complete worksheets or other assignments, turn them in electronically, and access new ones assignments.

## More collaborative, interactive learning

“Teachers tell me the classroom has become a much more collaborative environment. Their students work together on projects. They answer their own questions by doing independent research,” Berger reports. Teachers can stream video and use cameras and other digital tools to encourage interactivity, rather than simply lecturing. The school has begun collaborative projects through which students reach out to their peers in other schools.

Berger says the selection of an HP notebook PC was a natural. The district has turned to HP products—from servers to desktop PCs and printers—for many years, all provided through Computer Tech, an HP partner.

“We have a great relationship with HP,” Berger notes. “We continue to rely on HP for its cost and progression of technology, very high reliability, awareness of the education market’s needs, and willingness to work with us. HP always has solutions we can count on.”

## Full notebook PC capability

When they first examined it, the HP Mini PC impressed Berger and his staff with its capability and apparent durability. It had a larger hard drive and faster processor than other netbooks. “We felt that with the Mini, our students could do almost everything they could do with a regular notebook PC, whereas other netbooks limited our software choices.”

The district purchased 850 HP Mini PCs for the fifth and sixth grades. They are configured with an 80 GB hard drive,<sup>1</sup> 2 GB RAM, a six-cell battery, integrated webcam and wireless capability.<sup>2</sup> Software includes Genuine Windows® XP Home, Microsoft® Office, and educational programs including Skyward Student Management Suite, DyKnow Vision, Orchard and Inspiration, among others.

In addition to the computers themselves, the district invested in a spare battery for each Mini PC, and battery charging stations. “One of our concerns was whether the power would last,” Berger says. He reports battery life of four hours on average with the traditional laptops. When the district recently

**Windows®. Life without Walls™. HP recommends Windows.**

“HP brings to the table much more than hardware solutions. It brings training on how to integrate technology into a 1:1 classroom, and how to make the most impact on students. That’s what keeps us with HP: the value it brings to us as a school district. It’s truly a value-added dimension.”

Kyle Berger, executive director of technology services, Alvarado Independent School District



purchased some netbooks, he says, the battery life jumped to up to six hours.\* If a student’s notebook runs low on power, he or she can easily swap out the battery and go back to work.

Computer Tech, the local HP partner, images the PCs and prepares them for deployment on the district’s network. It also helped with deployment of the classroom infrastructure—digital projectors, interactive white boards, document cameras and battery charging stations.

Alvarado ISD has become a certified HP Self-Maintainer, so that Berger’s staff can perform warranty repairs on-site and get PCs back into student hands quickly—generally within 24 hours. “I would definitely encourage other schools to look into the Self-Maintainer Program,” Berger advises. “We can ensure quick turnaround and receive reimbursement for any warranty repairs, which does help fund our support services. And frankly, break/fix is very minimal.”

#### **A new way to learn**

Feedback has been positive from students and teachers alike. When asked about the laptop program, one student said simply, “This is how we learn.” Berger notes that today’s students have access to technology from a very young age. “If they come to a classroom without technology, they get bored. With it, they’re engaged. Now, it’s the way they learn, the way they collaborate, and the way they relate.”

Teachers, seeing students become more involved, are also on board. They spend less time struggling to get students interested, and more time teaching. They use HP Compaq dc5750 or dc5850 Small Form Factor PCs, in combination with digital projectors and interactive white boards, to lead their classes. The district has added two instructional technologists who offer classes to faculty members on integrating technology in the classroom.

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While many school districts choose to launch 1:1 technology programs in their high schools, Berger decided the intermediate school was a better fit for them. “We really want to track the progress of these students and gather data so we can see the true impact of the technology.” Moreover, he expects parents who are already impressed with the program to support expansion of the program so their children will be able to keep a PC as they move up toward high school.

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### Preparing for 1:1

Looking back, Berger acknowledges he built slowly toward the first 1:1 technology deployment. But he wouldn't do anything differently. "It took several years before we were actually able to deploy PCs to students. But it's not something you just jump into. You need to plan out teacher training, infrastructure needs, and other support. You can't just put a PC in a student's hands and hope to get results."

Much of that preparation involved HP products and services—from teacher training to the server

infrastructure supporting the wireless network. Berger says HP has played a critical role in the development of Alvarado's 21st century classroom.

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<sup>1</sup>For hard drives, 1GB = 1 billion bytes. Actual formatted capacity is less. Up to 8GB of system disk is reserved for system recovery software.

<sup>2</sup>Wireless access point and Internet service required. Availability of public wireless access points limited.

\*Battery life will vary depending on the product model, configuration, loaded applications, features, and power management settings. The maximum capacity of the battery will decrease with time and usage.

This customer's results depended upon its unique business and IT environment, the way it used HP products and services and other factors. These results may not be typical; your results may vary.

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