



## ► Cool Schools

*Emtec helps Duval County Public Schools undertake massive technology refresh.*

Every student likes to have brand new supplies on the first day of school — fresh notebooks, sharp pencils, a new backpack and more. A good portion of the approximately 130,000 students in the Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) found something else new when they returned for classes this year: new desktop computers.

DCPS, located in Jacksonville, Fla., is the 19th-largest school district in the U.S., comprising 165 schools and alternative learning centers. As part of a massive, ongoing technology refresh project, the district enlisted Emtec, Inc., to replace or upgrade 35,000 desktops in all of the district's 19 high schools and 22 of the 29 middle schools during the summer break. Other schools are to receive similar gear in the coming months.

Emtec has been a key IT partner for the district for the past five years, and was involved in technology refreshes at more than 50 DCPS school buildings during that time. But this was different. The sheer scope and compressed time frame made it a substantially more challenging project, but John Morrison, Executive Director of IT Operations for the school district, said Emtec has been more than up to the task.

*"The desktop refresh project is yet another example of the professional service Emtec provides on DCPS projects," said Morrison. "Our original schedule has been moved forward several weeks from the original aggressive projections due to efficiencies of project management and quality control processes."*

### Unified Platform:

This technology refresh is all part of a larger district initiative called "DCPS Schools of the Future," which is intended to maximize student achievement and student engagement. Although the district's older systems could do an adequate job, there comes a time when the hard and soft costs of aging equipment outweigh the cost of replacement. For DCPS, that time is now.

Lack of support for older operating systems was a compelling reason to upgrade PCs. Many of the district's PCs were running Windows 98, which is no longer supported by Microsoft. Without the ability to be supported with patches and upgrades, those machines are vulnerable to security risks.

*"They needed to get the Windows 98 machines off their network," said Cheryl Pullen, Senior Account Manager, Emtec. "In addition, they had a lot of other machines that came with Windows XP but were downgraded to Windows 2000. These systems retained the capability to upgrade back to XP at no charge, so the time was right to move everything to XP, to get to one operating system and one platform."*

With Windows XP, Microsoft began a process of continuous software maintenance. Security problems are addressed as soon as they are discovered, and patches distributed to IT managers and end-users as quickly as possible. This process has made the operating system much more secure.

### Replace & Repurpose:

Still, it isn't just a matter of upgrading the OS on an old machine. XP simply won't run well on older systems. It requires hardware with faster processors, faster system buses and higher-performance memory to take advantage of the latest applications and productivity-enhancing features.

Emtec's team has worked closely with the school district's IT team to identify which machines could be upgraded and which would need to be replaced. To date, some 20,000 PCs have been upgraded from Windows 2000 to XP, with another 15,000 replaced with Lenovo desktops.

Logistics and project management were keys to completing these initial phases of the project during the summer break, when there would be no disruption to classes or teachers' planning schedules. Emtec went to work immediately after Memorial Day weekend with a pilot project at one of the high schools.

More than 500 Lenovo desktops were shipped to a school district warehouse, where the Emtec team imaged and configured them with DCPS's valid software, palletized and asset tagged everything, transported them to the school building and installed them. All the old gear was removed at that time and shipped back to the warehouse, where those machines will either be repurposed or retired. The pilot project was completed in less than a week.

Impressed with Emtec's thorough and efficient performance in this "proof of concept" installation, the school district gave the green light to commence the full-scale refresh project at additional sites. In addition, DCPS also enlisted Emtec's support in installing 49 Apple servers, backup power, KVM switches and keyboard/monitor systems. This gear is designed to support several important educational assessment programs the district is undertaking.

### More than Meets the Eye:

Ginger Icenhour, Emtec Project Manager, said planning and flexibility are essential to staying on schedule with a project of this scope.

*"Besides the sheer volume, you have a very compact schedule since you obviously have to get it done in the summer when the students aren't there," she said. "But there are some other unusual considerations. For instance, you have to work around the custodial staff because they have to get all their cleaning done in the summer."*

*"Waxing the floors — that's something you wouldn't normally think about, but that's an issue. You don't want to drag pallets of equipment over the floors once they've already waxed them. So we coordinated with the custodial staff to make sure we weren't in their way."*

It's that kind of thoughtfulness and attention to detail that have earned Emtec the confidence of Duval County Public Schools.

*"Emtec is a valued partner with DCPS for providing desktop and printer deployments and service," said Morrison. "As with so many projects, the Emtec staff provides timely and professional support for all DCPS initiatives. I would, without reservation, recommend Emtec for any technology deployment!"*

### Technology with a Purpose:

Duval County Public Schools recognizes that technology plays a critical role in keeping students engaged and prepared for a fiercely competitive global marketplace. Yet, the district makes a key distinction: DCPS leadership believes instructional need must drive technology solutions, rather than employing technology for technology's sake.

As such, the district has some very specific goals for the technology refresh project for which Emtec was engaged. The gear had to support four key diagnostic and intervention software solutions:

- ◆ **NWEA** – Software run on a local server in a lab setting. It provides diagnostic tests that provide a quick reference for gauging student readiness for reading and mathematical instruction. Teachers can target instruction without spending hours conducting one-on-one testing.
- ◆ **Fast ForWord** – Also run on a local server in a lab setting, this is a neuroscience-based reading intervention software. The district will use these interventions to accelerate learning for struggling students, English-language learners and students preparing for college entrance exams.
- ◆ **Read 180** – A reading intervention program. As its name suggests, it is meant to get students who have a hard time reading and comprehending stories to make a turnaround and improve those skills. The program uses a variety of audio, video and written assignments to that end.
- ◆ **Compass/Odyssey** – A Web-based solution for grade/course recovery, credit enhancement and differentiated instruction. Targeted for middle and high school students who may have unconventional schedules, it can be used in a lab setting, in classrooms, at home or in any wireless hotspot.

**About Emtec:** Established in 1964, Emtec, Inc. is a systems integrator that provides IT services and products to the federal, state, local, education and commercial markets. Our market leading value-based management methods, coupled with best-in-class IT technology, consulting and development services, address a wide range of specific client needs, as well as support broader IT transformation initiatives. Emtec's service capabilities span the United States, Canada and countries around the globe.