

Bridging the technology gap

School District of La Crosse

LA CROSSE, WI

One size does not fit all

Nestled between the bluffs and Mississippi River on Wisconsin's west side, the School District of La Crosse serves approximately 7,000 students in its 20 schools. As a leader in providing unique and engaging experiences for students, it offers a variety of educational options that address its "one size does not fit all" mentality. Comprised of students from La Crosse, and its seven neighboring townships, the district has a diverse student population that drives it to deliver educational excellence through open minds and modern technology.



LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

As a method to address the socio-economic inequalities of its students, and attempt to close the tech gap between kids of all ages, the district implemented an iPad program in 2012. Jon Baudek, associate principal, Longfellow Middle School, School District of La Crosse, said the ability to provide the same device to everyone is imperative to providing consistent educational experiences. "It has taken away the feeling of the haves and the have-nots," he said. "It's giving kids equal access in the classroom and at home."

Each year the district re-evaluates the program and routinely sees the same results – it works. "It really does equalize the playing field. And that is so, so important," said Melissa Murray, principal at Lincoln/SOTA II/Coulee Montessori Middle School, School District of La Crosse. Though she admitted they weren't sure what the repercussions of putting devices in students' hands would be, they knew it was an educational necessity.

AT A GLANCE



Serves 7,000 students in 20 schools

Team of 6 staff members manage 8,000+ devices

iPad program gives equal access to technology for every student

Better technology means increased student-teacher interactions

10-minute device setup offers significant time savings

Top-notch product and support allows the program to succeed

“You would never think of a classroom without a textbook. You would never think of a classroom without a teacher. There are just some staples that belong there. Today, an iPad belongs there. Without them, we’d be doing a total disservice to our children.”

Vicki Lyons,
Director of Technology,
School District of La Crosse



SEE THE DIFFERENCE

The classroom dynamic is changing, and it’s making a difference. Through the extensive capabilities of the iPad, Lyons said she continues to see teachers giving more and more control of learning to their students. It’s a change that’s demonstrated significant enhancements to teacher-student interactions, which is creating more open, productive learning throughout the district.

Jeanne Halderson, seventh grade teacher at Longfellow Middle School, School District of La Crosse, couldn’t agree more. “Even with 30 computers in the classroom, I couldn’t make the same impact I can when each student has an iPad they can bring home,” she said, noting the limited classroom hours in contrast to the 24/7 availability of mobile devices. “I believe the iPads in my classroom have increased the amount of learning the children are doing.”

One of the most notable transformations Halderson said she’s seen since the iPad implementation is the amount of interaction the students have with each other and with the public. Prior to iPads, students would create a project, perhaps working in groups, with the end goal of presenting it to their teacher and/or class. Now, Halderson explained, they’re working on a project that they’ll post to Twitter – engaging outside perspective. “iPads in the classroom bring learning to the next level in a way that just wasn’t possible before,” she said.





ADOPT SMART MANAGEMENT

A successful iPad program starts long before the devices are distributed. Lyons said that along with a dedicated IT team, two things are imperative to achieving success: 1) a top-notch device, and 2) a way to manage it. That's why they chose Apple and Jamf.

"I believe in the functionality, durability and reliability of Apple," Lyons said. "I wouldn't use anything else." And when determining a mobile device management (MDM) solution, Lyons explained, "One of the most important things when you're working in a technology environment is to find a partner that understands education. Jamf does. They've given us the ability to

do what we really wanted to do to meet that end-user experience."

The school district's iPad program began with 3,000 devices. They've grown to more than 8,000 devices (iPad and MacBook Air) without the need to increase their technical staff. "The ability of our techs to be able to manage all of those devices with Jamf – you can't mimic that anywhere else," Lyons said. "Jamf makes our success. We would not be able to deliver what we deliver without it."



CELEBRATE TODAY'S SUCCESS

The fall of 2016 brought even greater success to the School District of La Crosse. Through the implementation of managed Apple IDs, their rollout was the smoothest they've seen. Grades K-4 once again enjoyed the ease of a shared iPad program in their classrooms, while the fifth graders received their individual devices for the first time. And as a way to ensure initial success with their iPads, each fifth-grade student attended a short evening setup session. "We get all the scary stuff out of the way," Lyons said, referencing setting up passwords and logins. In grades six through eight, students spent part of a morning reactivating their devices through simple teacher-led instruction. And for the first time, this fall, each high school student received a MacBook Air.

"It was the fastest, smoothest rollout we've seen to date," Lyons said. "Our behind-the-scenes work with Jamf's pre-stage enrollment and policies allowed students to unbox their devices and install necessary software through Jamf Self Service in less than 20 minutes." With this streamlined process, the district distributed iPads to 50 students at a time, equaling 1,800 devices in just 25 hours.

"Jamf makes sure their product allows us to do what we need to do with five-year-olds, while also providing high-enterprise businesses the functionality they rely on to be successful. That is unique. And that's one of the reasons we work with Jamf," Lyons said. "The people they hire, the people that serve us, the people that provide us support, are second to none."



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Created 12/2016. Modified 05/2018.

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