El Paso Independent School District

Texas district leverages HP Stream Notebook to transform education

Industry
K-12 Education

Objective
Provide tools for students to become active participants in their own education

Approach
Equip high school students with HP Stream Notebook PC

IT matters
- Equip 18,000 high school students with HP Stream Notebook PCs
- Empower teachers to customize digital content
- Ensure 100% device availability via swaps and service

Business matters
- Engage students with dynamic research and collaboration tools
- Move toward 100% project-based learning
- Empower students with HP Stream Notebooks while reducing costs of textbook purchases

> **"PowerUp is about creating an active learning environment to engage students and enable teachers to transform how they teach. A single laptop device replaces multiple static textbooks with dynamic content."**
>
> – Juan Cabrera, superintendent, El Paso Independent School District

The El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) serves 60,000 students on 94 Texas campuses. Many EPISD students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. EPISD's PowerUp program is integrating technology in a carefully designed initiative to engage and empower learners. EPISD recently distributed HP Stream Notebook PCs to 18,000 high school students.

As a high school student, carrying around seven or eight paper textbooks might well feel like hauling stone tablets. Books are heavy, cumbersome, static, and often out of date. EPISD traditionally replaced textbooks every eight years, but when that time came due recently, Superintendent Juan Cabrera had a different idea: to transform classroom teaching through the use of digital content.

"If we bought a device that hosts multiple textbooks and has the ability to make subject matter dynamic, we could give students both a research tool and a collaboration tool—an engaging environment where they could be active participants in their own learning," Cabrera says. "In no way does paper engage students like an electronic format can; the e-text environment can be rich with videos, interactivity, and content refreshed on the fly. It's a tool for transforming how education is delivered in the classroom."

It's also a tool for empowering students to succeed in the digital age. Approximately 80% of EPISD students are eligible for reduced-price or free lunches, an indicator of economic demographics. Many had never used computers before, and El Paso teachers had not yet integrated digital textbooks into their classroom methods. Therefore, the district did not simply distribute devices and hope for the best. Rather, it planned with care. A comprehensive four-page process checklist addresses every success factor, from teacher professional development all the way down to notebook repair and reimaging.

Students and faculty choose HP Stream Notebook

The first item on the checklist was device selection. EPISD initially wanted to consider three types of devices—laptops, tablets, and Chromebooks—and sent out a Request for Proposal that received 27 responses. An EPISD committee then narrowed the device options to a short list of three—a tablet, a touchscreen laptop (both non-HP), and the HP Stream Notebook.

Loan equipment was distributed to teachers and students for testing and the committee kept mum about its own preferences for HP as the industry-leading vendor. "The committee's top choice was the HP Stream but we didn't want to bias the teachers or students. We just gave them all three devices and said, 'Tell us what you think,'" recalls Stephen Stiles, EPISD chief technology officer.

"I personally thought the teachers would prefer the HP Stream and students would go for the tablet. To my surprise, they both went for the HP Stream. The students recognized that the tablets could break, and the detachable keyboards and styluses could get lost. They thought the HP Stream, with its portability and responsive keyboard, was best suited to their needs. It was a slam-dunk decision all the way around."

> "Preparation is everything. We have a process checklist that any district that wants to do an implementation like this needs to address."
>
> – Stephen Stiles, chief technology officer, El Paso Independent School District

Students liked that the thin and lightweight HP Stream Notebook, featuring an 11.6-inch diagonal display, would fit easily in backpacks. EPISD also provided them with carrying cases.

Windows 10 helps bring students up to speed while maximizing collaboration with Microsoft OneDrive* cloud storage. EPISD opts for the notebooks to come loaded with Microsoft Office 365 for the Office suite of applications. HP helped arrange for Microsoft to come in to train a core group of teachers, who then trained their colleagues—1,200 high school teachers—on basic application usage.

Meanwhile, district IT staff prepared the EPISD network and power infrastructures to optimize both online and offline functionality. The district also uses HP PCs in classroom

*Sold separately or as optional features.

mobile carts, and a number of administrators' notebook PCs are HP. "HP is a top-tier manufacturer and we've always had a great relationship," Stiles says. "HP brings expert knowledge of education-industry needs, and lets us know about technologies of the future." The district uses Mileposts software from Silverback Learning Solutions as a combination learning management and student tracking system, along with resources from Silverback's non-profit partner Gooru Learning.

EPISD bought the HP Stream Notebooks through HP Partner Abacus Computers Inc., which also provided initial imaging and asset tagging services, and helped arrange theft-protection traceability.

EPISD creates its own digital textbooks

The introduction of notebook PCs at EPISD went hand in hand with another district innovation: creating its own digital curriculum. EPISD started by downloading standard textbooks available for no-cost from the CK-12 Foundation, a California-based non-profit organization. Then, it paid its own teachers stipends to customize the content to EPISD curricula. On top of that, individual teachers may supplement the electronic content with their own videos and other material.

 "The device-selection committee, the teachers, the students—all three, hands down, named the HP Stream Notebook as their top choice."

– Stephen Stiles, chief technology officer, El Paso Independent School District

EPISD belongs to the League of Innovative Schools and the New Tech Network, and already has launched initiatives in two high schools to make teaching 100% project-based. It became clear to CTO Stiles that teachers were embracing the new digital teaching opportunities. He saw first-hand how many teachers populated the Office 365 environment with student assignments as soon as they learned to log on for the first time.

"There was no request or dictate from the district for this," he says. "The teachers did it on their own initiative. If you could get all of our 4,200 teachers in a room, you'd hear strong agreement that these tools are phenomenal." Today Stiles peeks into classrooms to see students enlivened in new ways, using their HP Stream Notebooks to learn, to communicate, and to deliver team presentations in front of the class. After distributing devices initially to 18,000 high school students, the district expanded to middle school algebra students.

Customer at a glance

Application
PowerUp program providing 1:1 notebooks in high schools and middle school algebra

Hardware
• HP Stream Notebook PC

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– Juan Cabrera, superintendent, El Paso Independent School District

Operations efficiency with interactive content

To measure the success of the PowerUp program, EPISD will look at academic metrics such as standardized test scores and classroom grades, as well as at behavioral measures such as attendance and disciplinary actions. It's too soon to report on such indicators, but one telling metric that can be estimated with available data is operations efficiency. Replacing paper textbooks for 18,000 high school students with e-text—as EPISD is doing it, by customizing free content from the CK-12 Foundation—saves "money annually" while delivering current interactive content.

Not only is the PowerUp approach welcomed by teachers, it's also more cost effective for the district. The key to success, Stiles emphasizes, is preparation, with every staffing, procedural, technical, and communication aspect planned in advance. Equally important is to embrace the philosophy that technology in the classroom is not about devices, it's about collaboration between the technology and academic sides of the house to create fundamental change.

"Anybody can put a device into kids' hands; that's just following a logistics path," Superintendent Cabrera says. "But you have to ask, 'To what end?' In our case, the end is to change how teaching and learning happen in the classroom. We've got engaged, collaborative kids embracing responsibility for their own education."

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