Whitfield School

To enhance student learning, Whitfield School has provided laptops to its students as part of its student computing initiative. Novell® Linux Desktop provides a cost-effective option that has significantly reduced hardware and software costs, while opening a whole new world of open source software to bright and curious students.

Overview

Founded in 1952, Whitfield School is an independent, coeducational college preparatory day school for grades 6–12, located on a 25-acre campus in west St. Louis, Missouri. The school has 475 students and approximately 100 faculty and staff.

Challenge

Whitfield School prides itself on IT innovation to give its students a dynamic learning environment. Providing online access to research is a key part of the school's educational philosophy and as a result, the school's computer labs were often booked weeks in advance, even with a 3–1 student to computer ratio.

Whitfield wanted to provide its students with access to laptop computers in each classroom so they could immediately research their questions and interests while in class, but required a sustainable solution that was reliable and cost-effective to manage.

Solution

Managing student laptops requires a secure and stable operating system to protect against viruses, adware and spyware. Whitfield School evaluated Microsoft*

Windows*, Red Hat* and Mandrake* before selecting SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server and Novell Linux Desktop.

"As anyone in education IT knows, kids go out of their way to download games and software which can wreak havoc on systems," said Alex Inman, director of Technology for Whitfield School. "We considered a Windows desktop, but found that it would be far more difficult and expensive to manage than a Linux desktop. Novell Linux Desktop was by far the best option."

Whitfield implemented Novell ZENworks® Linux Management, running on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server on an IBM* BladeCenter, to manage its Novell Linux desktops and has experienced zero downtime. As this is the school's first use of Linux, Whitfield has a back-end Windows environment for file, print and e-mail and uses Citrix* to give its students access to Windows applications from their Linux laptops.

Whitfield worked with Data Technique, a Novell Platinum Partner, to set up a ZENworks Linux Management server and create a Linux image for each of its Lenovo ThinkPad* laptops. Creating a new Linux

Whitfield School at a glance:
College preparatory school for grades 6–12

- **Industry:**
  Education
- **Location:**
  United States
- **Solutions:**
  SUSE Linux Enterprise Server
  Novell Linux Desktop
  ZENworks Linux Management
- **Results:**
  – *Reduced software and hardware acquisition costs by 27 percent*
  – *Provided Linux desktops to students for a fraction of the cost of Microsoft desktops*
  – *Reduced imaging time by 80 percent*

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Alex Inman
Director of Technology
Whitfield School

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configuration costs no more than creating a new Windows image. The IT staff can also use ZENworks Linux Management to deliver applications and updates to all its laptops in less than a day.

"ZENworks Linux Management is the only enterprise-class management tool for Linux," said Inman. "We could not have implemented a wide-scale Linux desktop environment without some way to centrally manage it. In fact, we have much greater success managing Linux with ZENworks and Novell eDirectory™ than we do managing the Windows machines in our labs with SMS and Active Directory*."

Whitfield students now have access to OpenOffice, a Linux desktop productivity suite, as well as host of open source software including Evolution™ for e-mail, Firefox* for Internet browsing, GAIM for instant messaging and GIMP for photo editing.

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Students now have immediate access to information and tools while in the classroom and teachers can do research on the fly to respond to students' interests. Students have also learned how to use the terminal command line in Linux to customize their systems, something they could not have done with a Windows or Macintosh* computer.

"We are dramatically improving the ability of our students to communicate and collaborate," said Inman. "We set up a virtual Apache server so they can produce a daily online newspaper. Without Linux, this would have been cost prohibitive."

With Linux, the IT staff has been able to initiate the school's student computing initiative while keeping costs under control and hiring only one additional administrator. The staff also spends significantly less time imaging machines each week which adds up to thousands of dollars of savings.

Results

With SUSE Linux Enterprise Server and Novell Linux Desktop, Whitfield School can afford to provide its students with laptops to enhance their learning. The school has significantly reduced its hardware and software costs, resulting in a 27 percent reduction in acquisition costs.

The school has experienced zero downtime with its SUSE Linux servers and has significantly better security against viruses and other potential vulnerabilities such as spyware and adware. The IT staff has also reduced desktop imaging time by 80 percent with ZENworks Linux Management.

"Novell has a phenomenal commitment to schools," said Inman. "We can provide Novell Linux Desktop for a fraction of the cost of a Microsoft desktop. Our kids love it and we are getting a lot of interest from other schools about implementing a similar solution."

Contact your local Novell Solutions Provider, or call Novell at:

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