

## Virtualization for Dallas County School District.

### The Challenge

Like many school districts, DCSD has a large technology footprint. Technicians must manage thousands of computers across multiple campuses to serve a broad range of educational needs. “For many years, we oversaw a huge array of standalone desktops,” says Brooks Moore, Manager of Technology Services at DCSD. “We had very little flexibility. Each machine had a limited set of tasks it could execute to serve the needs of particular students.” For technicians like Gayla Gideon, that meant a laborious process of constantly configuring machines to suit changing requirements. “I would go into a computer lab, install software on 30 machines, connect to the server 30 times, and so on,” she says. “Then every summer, we’d send out a whole crew of IT folks to go computer by computer, cleaning up machines and doing general maintenance. It was incredibly time-consuming.”

These inefficiencies became especially burdensome as the Dallas County School District began administering assessment tests online. “Testing is a big part of the curriculum here in Texas,” explains Moore. “Over the past few years, we’ve been making the transition from pencil-and-paper tests to online assessments. But in our old IT environment, we would need to lock down individual machines before every single online test, and that took a huge amount of extra time and effort. We needed a more flexible infrastructure, plain and simple.”

### The HVE Solution

When Dallas County School District began to consider its options, school leaders chose HVE Connexions for a number of reasons, including simplified management and the prospect of significant cost savings.

Now, instead of managing thousands of individual machines, the DCSD IT team can focus on maintaining a handful of servers in the school district’s data center. “We’ve repurposed all of those old machines, whether they’re laptops or desktops or thin clients,” says Moore. “Students and teachers simply use them to access our virtual machines. That represents a massive shift forward for us. The HVE solution has completely changed the game, because all we have to worry about is maintenance back at the data center. Everything from updates to patches—even upgrading operating systems—can be done from a central location.” *Continued on back...*



### Profile

**Location:** Dallas, Texas

**Number of Districts:** 14

**Students:** over 95,000

### Overview

**Repurposed** 20,000 existing PC desktops

**Deployed** 10,000 zero clients  
Virtualized approximately 75% of their machines.

#### Platform

HVE 201 V2

VMware vSphere

VMware Horizon View

#### Applications Virtualized

Pearson TestNav Delivery System

Skyward – School administrative Software

Microsoft Office

## The HVE Solution *continued*

In fact, the DCSD IT team has yet to discover a scenario where the HVE solution hasn't made an improvement, recently expanding its implementation to address some of the challenges around online testing. "For every scenario you can imagine in an education environment, we're using virtual machines," says Moore. "This solution has opened up some powerful possibilities for us. We virtualized our Pearson testing application just as easily as we virtualize Microsoft Office or any Adobe product. HVE has made our lives much easier from a technology perspective, and we're not compromising the end user's experience one bit."

## Business Benefits

The Dallas County School District's IT team had predicted that the HVE solution would save a great deal of money. They just didn't anticipate how much. "Our estimated cost savings were focused on cutting power consumption," says Moore. "We've certainly saved a lot of money there, but that's only the beginning. We're no longer investing as many person-hours to sit in those cars, or to install software on 30 individual machines. All of those cost savings are like a ripple effect."

The HVE solution also helps ensure that more students have access to a broader range of IT services on demand. "Not so long ago, we couldn't necessarily set up a lab to accommodate two different classes in a row," says Gideon. "Now we can turn just about any classroom on a dime. Students have more opportunities for online learning, and they're far less likely to damage the software or alter the desktop for the next student. They're not saving their work on a C drive so we no longer worry about machines getting clogged up with students' personal files. And we don't have as many big, bulky computers taking up space in our computer labs."

With HVE, Dallas County School District's IT team has streamlined the online testing process to accommodate the district's need for more assessments in less time. "It's so much easier for our technology staff to manage all of these state-mandated tests," says Moore. "We have a testing image that we can deploy in a matter of minutes—it's just a few clicks. We can even deploy a test to an iPad. And as soon as the test is over we can flip the image back to a normal classroom environment almost instantly. Online testing is something that keeps a lot of IT managers up at night, but for us it's just another Monday morning."

## Looking Ahead

Dallas County School District has virtualized approximately 75 percent of its machines with plans to virtualize more. "There are still some cases where a standalone physical laptop comes in handy," says Moore. "But for us, that's very much the exception. We're constantly looking for new ways to deploy our HVE solution because we're just thrilled with the results we've seen so far."

## Dallas County School District

Dallas County School District, based in downtown Dallas, provides education services to approximately 95,000 students with a team of over 2,000 professionals who strive daily to serve Dallas County's 14 independent school districts. The district is perhaps best known for being the 4<sup>th</sup> largest pupil transportation organization in the US.

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—Brooks Moore

*Manager of Technology Services,  
Dallas County Schools*



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