



A Portable Education Perry Middle School

Replacing outdated computers with the Fujitsu U800 Convertible Mini-Notebook optimized students' learning experience.

CHALLENGE: Perry Middle School was relying on obsolete desktop computers, which provided few opportunities for teachers to integrate computing into the curriculum.

SOLUTION:

Fujitsu LifeBook® U800 Series convertible mini-notebooks now provide the middle school students with a 21st Century teaching tool with rugged portability and the ability to adapt to evolving needs.

BENEFIT:

"Using Microsoft® Office OneNote® on the Fujitsu U800 Series mini-notebook introduces unlimited possibilities for tracking and sharing information. Two seventh grade teachers are already maintaining blogs on language arts and math, and we see students using it for their own blogs and for compiling the information for their video projects—and they can do this no matter where they happen to be on campus."

— Scott Hunt, Principal of
Perry Middle School

Middle School Gets a Makeover

Technology is a priority for Perry Public Schools. In 2002, the school's technology program received an Innovations in American Government Award from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. The campus has deployed a local area network with wireless Internet access, and the infrastructure is managed by an Information Service Department (IS) and a nationally acclaimed, student-run computer service company, Perritech.

But despite the growth and evolution of the LAN, the computers in use at the middle school were not being updated. When Scott Hunt became the principal of Perry Middle School in 2007, one of his first tasks was to evaluate the current state of technology. "I came to the middle school from the high school, where our computers were kept up to date, but the "middle school was saddled with more than 200 obsolete computers that were between 10 and 13 years old."

Hunt met with his district leadership team and asked a fundamental question. "What does the future of technology hold for our kids?" The answer was "portability" enabled by handheld PDAs that could leverage the school's wireless network, so students could take a vital learning tool wherever the educational context demanded. Explained Hunt, "Our students are already comfortable with ultra-portable devices like cell phones and game players. While we discourage the use of these devices at school, we knew we could take advantage of that familiarity to further our educational goals."

The search for the right PDA was a short one. A member of IS introduced Hunt and his team to the LifeBook U800 Series convertible mini-notebook, which has all the functionality of a traditional notebook but is only half the size and sports a 5.6" WSVGA Crystal View touch screen display. At a mere 1.56 lbs., it is one of the world's smallest convertible notebooks, yet it is rich with the features students need: access to the Internet, the ability to take notes and watch videos, and the ability to capture video, an important teaching tool.

Hunt and the Perry School District were already familiar with Fujitsu. The district had purchased a number of LifeBook Series S notebooks for use by the teachers, and the overall experience with Fujitsu was fantastic. In 2007, the Perry School District ordered 190 LifeBook U800 Series mini-notebooks, 150 for the middle school and an additional 40 for the high school. The notebooks were delivered in the spring of 2008.

The New Teaching Tool

Hunt and his team recognized that although students would easily adapt to the ultra-portable notebooks, some veteran teachers might struggle with how to introduce the devices into the classroom and how to use an interface that was slightly different from a traditional notebook. To ensure a comfortable introduction and the maximum benefit from the new technology, Hunt provided six of the mini-notebooks to a technologically astute fifth grade teacher, Adam Marino, who began using them in the classroom and tracked any minor issues that could present a challenge for the other teachers.

One of Marino's first uses for the LifeBook U800 Series mini-notebook was to have students capture video of themselves conducting demonstrations and science experiments. Explained Marino, "I've learned that having students make a movie while they work through a lesson prevents the students from over-thinking the mechanics of the experiment and helps drive home the lesson's real goal. The hands-on nature of creating a video also ensures that students remember this lesson well past the date of their next test."

Students record their projects and experiments while explaining the significance of each step. The pressure to shine in front of peers ensures very careful preparation and rehearsals, which reinforces the lessons. Along with strengthening knowledge of the subject, recording a presentation builds speaking skills and confidence. In addition, it allows a successful lesson to be shared with other teachers, students and parents, while absent students can catch up on what they missed.

Based on Marino's success, video capture projects will be one of the standard uses for the mini-notebooks during the 2008-2009 school year. Another important use will be note taking. The LifeBook U800 Series mini-notebook transforms from a standard notebook into a tablet by rotating and folding down the screen. In tablet mode, students use the stylus for taking notes or preparing information.



Perry Middle School student Austyn Cousins uses the LifeBook U800 Series mini-notebook in the classroom.

Said Principal Hunt, "Using Microsoft® Office OneNote® on the Fujitsu U800 Series mini-notebook introduces unlimited possibilities for tracking and sharing information. Two seventh grade teachers are already maintaining blogs on language arts and math, and we see students using it for their own blogs and for compiling the information for their video projects—and they can do this no matter where they happen to be on campus."

As part of introducing the notebooks, the middle school had to develop new security protocols to make sure the small devices don't disappear. "We've really solved the challenge of keeping our students safe online through very robust filtering," added Hunt, "and we needed to make sure the devices were equally safe. By instituting some simple and clear protocols for teachers to follow and adding security software that allows us to track the devices via GPS, we've established very solid security for the devices without creating an onerous environment."

Working With Fujitsu

According to Hunt, Fujitsu gets very high marks as a vendor. "The Fujitsu team was willing to put some real time into our project. They visited the school and talked to our team, and they were very excited about how we planned to use mini-notebooks in the classroom and how such an approach could be replicated. Now I know I can go to Fujitsu Professional Services and get the assistance I need. I doubt I would get the same level of support from other vendors."

"When Do I Get Them!"

Based on Adam Marino's success at using the LifeBook U800 Series mini-notebook, Principal Hunt is seeing mounting excitement among his other teachers. "Some teachers approached the mini-notebooks with skepticism, but now the question is, 'When are we getting them?'"

Hunt expects that once the devices are distributed and new programs are developed that take advantage of portability, the mini-notebooks will be in use throughout the school day. "They have excellent battery life and they're very rugged, which is important in a school environment. And we have only begun to explore all the possibilities. Whether it's classroom projects for video conferencing and blogging, or specialty websites for studying physics and math in ways that are impossible offline, or perhaps a new distance learning initiative, our Fujitsu LifeBook U800 Series mini-notebooks will be a key instructional tool for the 21st Century."

We have the breadth, scale and experience to deliver unprecedented business value.



Dueling LifeBook U800 Series mini-notebooks—one held by Scott Hunt (left) Perry Middle School principal and one held by fifth grade teacher Adam Marino (right).



Perry Middle School principal Scott Hunt catches a replay of Perry Middle School's football game.



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FPC58-2033-02 4/09.
09.0228