LapCabby
New thinking in IT storage

Killough Middle School leads the way with device management cohort project
Innovative middle school supports device management and education technology
initiatives with LapCabby's 'best of ISTE' UniCabby

✓ **1,000 students** ✓ **All major devices** ✓ **Driving to 1:1**

School Background

Killough is the dedicated Middle School campus for Aleif Independent School District which is home to "one of the most diverse student bodies in Texas", serving residents of the 36.6 square mile Harris County in Houston, Texas. The middle school comprises 7th and 8th grade students, covering all curriculum areas and class types.

We recently discussed the school's device deployment, technology integration, and chosen LapCabby charging solution with Dan Blevins, the Instructional Technology Specialist at Killough. Initially looking at the student to device ratio at Killough, Dan stated, "We have about 1000 students, and we are almost at a 1:1 ratio across all our devices, encompassing laptop computers, surface tablets, iPads and all other major devices. At last count its about 1 device for every 1.2 students."

Challenge

As the Instructional Technology Specialist at Aleif and Killough, Dan expressed the importance of technology across the schools and wider district as well as highlighting the challenges faced when implementing and managing the devices - to ensure a significant return on the investment in technology.

Dan explained, "When you announce to all the teachers, 'we have these laptops and you get them from a designated person', you get a lot of usage at first, but then it tapers off. And one of the reasons for this is, you don't have a way to control checking devices out. People forget about it, nobody wants to be in charge of managing the process, from the librarian, teachers and myself, we are all too busy!"

Alongside concerns surrounding management and allocation of devices, Dan explained, the return on investment remains a key deciding factor for schools and districts, "the problem comes with these districts and schools, where they spend all this money on devices, and the worry comes as to whether they will be utilised. For example, a teacher checks out a laptop cart, uses only five, and there are 27 laptops just sitting there. Which could be used in different classrooms, so it becomes hard to justify spending all that money… and there is often no way to track device usage."

Why Killough Middle School chose UniCabby...

Use a range of devices

Compact in the school environment

Unique cable management

Charging schedules

Device management cohort project

Dan and his team have developed a future thinking pilot to aid the concerns around optimising device usage and utilising technology across all curriculum areas. The initiative will build a structured system, engaging specified teachers to manage devices and collaborate together. Dan chose the LapCabby UniCabby to underpin the project.

"What we've done is, handpicked 8 teachers, across all curriculum areas, all levels, special education, ESL and all the other content areas across 7th and 8th grade. I've assigned the UniCabby to these 8 teachers, they are totally responsible for it, they are working out how they're going to share the laptops, how to check it out and coordinate how many laptops they're going to need for their lesson or day or number of days."

Dan went on to state, "We think this will be a prosperous model because, all that we ask is that these teachers collaborate on this, and so they sit down, they meet and they plan out the best way to manage this. We have not seen this model before."

From the day the UniCabby arrived, Dan was impressed, "I looked at it without opening it up and I thought gee this looks a little small, I don't know if this can do a lot of what it says it can do, it's also a lot smaller than some laptop carts I've seen, so we opened it up and easily started putting 32 laptops in. I thought wow this is cool, and the teachers commented on this, saying 'wow it looks really great and easy' and the unique cable management, that's a definite plus."

By giving control to the teachers, Dan highlights the several aspects and responsibilities which come with managing devices to support a digital classroom. He mentions teachers are, "totally in charge of it, from maintenance to making sure laptops are fully charged.

Key Benefits

• Delivers technology to every classroom
• Minimizes classroom distractions
• Reduces lost and broken cables
• Supports the implementation of a 1:1 initiative
• Enhances classroom Health and Safety
• Sturdy centre of gravity – eliminates safety concerns

UniCabby

Following implementation of this project, Dan has received positive feedback on the UniCabby solution from the group of teachers involved, "the 8 teachers are really pleased with the performance of the cart, we'll be getting more laptops once we return back to school, so we will be expanding this model with more carts. The teachers have all commented on the UniCabby's cable management, saying it was so easy to manage.

Enhancing device accessibility and usage

In order for the cohort to be a success Dan explains the importance of team work, from the teachers and educators involved in the pilot, to the students, technologies and integration with the curriculum. "Because of collaboration and teamwork within in the student lessons, what we have found is that for most lessons, the teachers don't need a 1:1 ratio of laptop to students."

The Middle School's innovative approach to device storage doesn't stop there, with development plans already in the pipeline, "we are developing an online check out system, so the teacher can pull up that they need 5 laptops for this lesson, then identify that there are 5 available, all the laptops are numbered, check them out, and go pick them up. And the teachers swap and take turns managing the online checking system, they work out all the logistics. Including how to label, one teacher suggested that as the devices are flat, we put a little label on the edge, so it's easy for students to select and replace devices."

Killough Middle School is part of Aleif Independent School District, although this cohort project is, initially, being implemented for the middle school, Dan highlighted his enthusiasm to impart these ideas and processes further afield, "We just started this with our local campus, with that in mind, we always want to share with the other schools in the districts, and anyone else who wants to know."

Supporting learning

Dan discussed the usual approach from schools and districts to buying new technology, and the reasoning behind the cohort, "So often for schools and districts, the model is let's just spend all this money, buy all this stuff and they think, that's it we've solved the problem."

"We are now able to track the use of the individual laptops, so this helps to justify the technology and demonstrate the ROI. And we have found, if you can justify the expense of one type of technology, well you can then justify another type of technology, it all builds upon each other."

The expanding device mesh

Dan reflected on the student-to-device ratio and importance of having different device types, "we have been fortunate to buy all this technology, but we also plan how we use this so even though we have this, and it sounds great to have one device per 1.2 students, but they all have different uses."

> "From an engineering perspective we are just amazed at the design and how much you have packed into it.
>
> **Dan Blevins, Killough Middle School**

The storage cart that keeps on giving

At Killough as well as providing devices and technology, the middle school also employ a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative. However, this approach demands flexible and secure charging, to effectively provide students with "another level of devices and connectivity" Dan stated.

Dan highlighted some benefits sought from the multi-device, compact UniCabby cart at the school, "we realise we have to manage device storage with the infrastructure, we can't just buy charging carts and sit them in a corner.

LapCabby solutions boast integrated charging schedules, which can be programmed to suit any establishment or user-base requirements, saving the teachers and Dan considerable time, "anything we have that can save time in managing device, and let me get back to my core duty – which is instruction – is hugely beneficial," Dan told us.

The laptops stored, charged and meticulously managed with the UniCabby at Killough, directly support every curriculum area, a growing range of software, and countless learning methods. Dan explained, "from social studies, language and science, to arts and the athletic department – all the content areas are supported by technology. We all use a lot of laptops for various different reasons. The types of

things they do, go from the usual research, to creating multi-media, then they get into video conferencing, a lot of online Web 2.0 stuff, like Kahoot, you think it, they do it."

Dan communicated the value in having the ability to explore these new technologies with the confidence that the devices deployed effectively support the initiatives. Dan explained, "We utilise a lot of whiteboard technology, we have great Boardshare interactive whiteboard technology, which is very cost efficient so we are packaging this with iPads and Laptops in classrooms."

And the innovation doesn't end there, "The second thing is, we have a big Science, Technology, Education and Mathematics (STEM) movement, we are creating a STEM academy, a schools within a school. This will be our second year on this, so that's a whole other area where laptops and devices will be used in the content of STEM", Dan explained. Facilitating technology collaboration in order for the school's laptops to directly support the focus on education technology, the store and charge solution must tick all the boxes. Dan articulated how the UniCabby has done this at Killough, "the laptops we have are now interacting with other technologies, and that's a great thing because these devices are moving across all the classrooms and curriculum areas. And, you have to have a central location – in various parts of the building - where you can keep them together, where you can safely store and charge."

Author Spotlight

Instructional Technology Specialist
at Killough Middle School

Although as the Instructional Technology Specialist, Dan must integrate devices and carts with the classrooms and get the teachers and educators on board, he explains the different angles the UniCabby has impacted, "from an engineering perspective we are just amazed at the design and how much you have packed into it, and as an instructional technology specialist I have to look at an instructional as well as support angles. And from an instructional, well, it is something you can store laptops in – you can roll it around, but that's all I need. But with the UniCabby you can also support this and the other considerations, I think you guys have done a great job at designing it."

With so much technology, a growing student base, and time-stretched staffing teams to support, Dan stated, "Why would you spend this much money on a laptop cart, when if it's going to be difficult to use, why not just get a big box from Home Depot or Walmart, stick some surge protectors and plug them in?"

He then went on to emphasize the simplicity in using the UniCabby, "So you have to ask yourself, 'What is the value add?' and that's what you guys [LapCabby] have done!"

About LapCabby

Committed to designing IT Storage solutions for over 20 years, LapCabby delivers the most robust and innovative solutions to over 44 counties across the globe. With a passion for all things digital – we are committed to delivering portable and static ICT storage solutions to deliver class and work ready devices in a secure and safe environment.

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