

School district enables digital curriculum while saving \$180,000

Seminole County Public Schools advances education by efficiently managing 30,000 desktops and laptops while achieving 99.9 percent uptime with Dell solutions



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Tom Condo, Supervisor of IS Operations, Seminole County Public Schools

Customer profile



Company	Seminole County Public Schools
Industry	Education
Country	United States
Employees	8,000 employees 66,000 students
Website	www.scps.k12.fl.us

Institutional need

To enable its digital curriculum, Seminole County Public Schools needed to efficiently manage its 30,000 desktops and laptops, and protect students with content filtering, while minding the budget.

Solution

The district not only achieved those goals, but also delivered 99.9 percent uptime and saved more than \$180,000 by replacing multiple existing systems with Dell KACE appliances and SonicWall next-generation firewalls.

Benefits

- Enabled digital curriculum by delivering 99.9 percent uptime while ensuring student safety
- Saved \$80,000 in 18 months by consolidating functions with Dell next-generation firewalls
- Enabled easy management of 30,000 desktops and laptops
- Saved \$100,000 over three years by replacing multiple systems with Dell KACE appliances

Solutions at a glance

- Endpoint Systems Management
- Network Security

With 66,000 students, Florida's Seminole County Public Schools is one of the largest school districts in the United States. To enable the forward-thinking initiatives that help make it one of the most highly performing districts in the state, while also ensuring security and reducing costs, Seminole County Public Schools relies on Dell.

Improving education with technology requires effective systems management

Seminole County Public Schools' commitment to education includes giving teachers and students access to appropriate technologies while ensuring security and fiscal responsibility. To that end, Information Services (IS) staff must effectively manage the district's 20,000 desktops and 10,000 laptops — ensuring accurate inventory, swift deployment, timely software updates, and efficient troubleshooting. However, its former toolset was sorely lacking.

"We had an inventory software solution, but it was not able to give us a complete picture of our assets," explains Tom Condo, supervisor of IS operations, Seminole County Public Schools. "We had no way of keeping up with updates to critical software like Java, Mozilla Firefox and Adobe Acrobat, which was not just an inconvenience for users, but also an important security concern."

The district's issue reporting solution was no better. "Our former helpdesk ticketing system was antiquated," Condo continues. "Because it lacked an easy web interface, most of the time users did not submit tickets but instead called or visited IS staff to ask for help, which made it difficult to queue and prioritize issues. Moreover, the helpdesk system had no knowledge base to help us resolve issues for our staff and students."

"Our previous imaging solution had many different images, which led to inconsistent operating system and software deployments. Therefore, maintaining the machines was difficult,

and in many cases, systems did not have the necessary updates and patches to ensure security," notes Condo.

Asset management and service desk on a single appliance

Seminole County Public Schools began searching for solutions to its systems management challenges, and discovered the Dell KACE K1000 Systems Management Appliance and K2000 Systems Deployment Appliance.

The district was impressed with the K1000's breadth of functionality combined with ease of use. "Other vendors were proposing solutions that would have required us to install, configure and maintain multiple servers," recalls Condo. "The KACE K1000 provides both inventory and service desk on a single appliance, and it was far less expensive than the competitive solution we considered. Moreover, the K1000 management interface is very easy to use, and it was extremely easy to deploy district-wide; the other vendor

Products & Services

Hardware

[SonicWall SuperMassive 9600 firewalls](#)

Software

[Dell KACE K1000 Systems Management Appliance](#)

[Dell KACE K2000 Systems Deployment Appliance](#)

[SonicWall Content Filtering Service](#)

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was significantly more complex, with multiple components that needed to be integrated, making it much tougher to deploy district-wide.”

Seminole County Public Schools is using the K1000 to manage its 30,000 desktops and laptops. Now the district has an accurate inventory of its assets and can keep all the machines properly updated. “With the K1000, we can easily deploy software updates for Java, Acrobat Reader, browsers and more,” says Condo. “That has been a tremendous help for keeping up to date with security because those applications tend to be the ones that have security vulnerabilities.”

The district also makes good use of the K1000’s integrated service desk. “End users submit at least 200 to 300 tickets per day to our Information Services department,” comments Condo. “The K1000’s service desk enables us to handle all of those tickets efficiently.”

The K2000 complements the K1000 by simplifying disk imaging and deployment. “The K2000 allowed us to create standard images for our desktop and laptop models,” notes Condo. “And it has been tremendously easy for us to deploy those images, so now we have a standard platform across the district.”

Saving more than \$100,000 while reducing space and power needs

Together, the K1000 and K2000 appliances have delivered a solid return on investment for Seminole County Public Schools. “The K1000 and K2000 replaced three separate systems and eliminated the need to purchase a significantly more expensive competitive solution, saving us at least \$100,000 in the last three years” says Condo. “In addition, the appliances have a smaller footprint than our previous solution, so we need less physical space and have reduced our energy costs.”

A firewall that delivers far more than content filtering

With the KACE appliances improving the learning environment by simplifying asset management, troubleshooting and deployment, Seminole County Public Schools was ready for its next challenge: replacing its existing web content filtering solution, which was a separate solution from its firewall.

The district found the content filtering it needed in the SonicWall SuperMassive 9600 next-generation firewall — plus much more. “We chose the SuperMassive initially for the web filtering,” notes Condo. “Then we discovered that it included many other features that were available only at additional cost with our previous firewall, such as malware protection, anti-virus and intrusion prevention. Therefore, when our old firewall was sunset, we chose the SuperMassive.”

Real-time threat intelligence, granular access control and more

Seminole County Public Schools now has the security it needs, thanks to the SuperMassive and real-time threat updates from the SonicWall Global Response Intelligent Defense (GRID) Network, which collects and analyzes threat information from user contributions, certified black lists, industry sources, Dell’s Threat Response Team and more. “The SuperMassive enables us to detect threats that we could not see with our previous solution,” Condo says. “Dell threat intelligence and GRID are very important to us. We sleep better at night knowing that Dell has a team dedicated to researching the latest security threats.”

Seminole County Public Schools now relies on the broad range of features that the Dell firewalls provide. Its application intelligence and control gives administrators granular control over applications and users. For example, they can use application-based policy to restrict or block the transfer of specific files and documents, prioritize

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or throttle bandwidth, and deny access to internal or external websites. “Plus, the SuperMassive natively includes the ability to authenticate users and restrict application or web site usage via Active Directory — a capability our previous solution did not provide natively,” notes Condo.

Achieving 99.9 percent uptime while saving \$80,000 in OPEX over 18 months

With the SuperMassive, administration is far simpler. “Previously, we had a web-based management interface for our web content filtering appliance, as well as a software package for firewall administration on client PCs,” Condo says. “We now have only web-based management interface for managing everything. In short, the SuperMassive consolidated two solutions into one for us, which saves us not only capital costs but management effort, since we now have only one interface and one support organization to work with.”

Moreover, by setting up two SuperMassive 9600s in a high availability (HA) cluster, Seminole County Public Schools has achieved 99.9 percent uptime, ensuring that systems are available to meet the needs of students and teachers.

“We like the fact that the SonicWall SuperMassive is an appliance, rather than a server that we have to install and maintain software on,” Condo explains. “And with two SuperMassives in an HA cluster, we have achieved 99.9 percent uptime, which is critical for our digital curriculum — while also saving \$80,000 in operating expenses over the 18 months we’ve had them. Plus, like the KACE appliances, the SuperMassives have a smaller footprint and require less power than our previous solution.”

Moreover, Dell delivers world-class support the district can depend on. “We are very pleased with our experience with Dell service and support,” says Condo. “Dell went above and beyond to assist us with the transition off of our previous firewall solution, and we have found the support engineers to be very helpful whenever we need them.”

Meeting tomorrow’s needs as well as today’s

With the Dell KACE appliances and the SonicWall SuperMassives, Seminole County Public Schools is not only meeting its current needs; it is poised to continue being a top educational institution into the future. “Having KACE and SonicWall in place together has allowed us to grow our IT infrastructure to support education,” explains Condo. “The KACE appliances allow us to manage our increasing inventory of 30,000 devices while the SuperMassive enables us to grow our network infrastructure — all while saving us over \$180,000.”

Condo points to rapidly growing bandwidth requirements as a prime example. “In the past three years, we’ve gone from consuming only 140 MB in internet bandwidth to consuming almost 2 GB. While our previous firewall allowed us to have only a gigabyte of traffic, the SonicWall SuperMassive 9600 cluster allows us to go all the way up to 10 GB,” he says. “That’s critical for our digital curriculum, including the growing use of distance learning. It’s also crucial for online state assessment tests that are required for students to graduate, and for teachers to be evaluated on performance-based pay, as well as for our bring-your-own-device (BYOD) initiatives.”

Seminole County Public Schools’ partnership with Dell has allowed the school district to be well positioned as a Future Ready School district.

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