



London District Catholic School Board enhances computing experience with Windows 7 Enterprise.

Overview

Country or Region: Canada

Industry: Education

Customer Profile

The London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB) serves more than 21,000 Ontario students in the counties of Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin, including the cities of London, St. Thomas and Woodstock.

Business Situation

To deliver a stronger computing experience for staff and faculty, the LDCSB wanted to centralize its technology processes and develop a more integrated applications environment.

Solution

The LDCSB standardized on the Windows 7 operating system and deployed Microsoft Application Virtualization (App-V)—part of the Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack—to virtualize its applications.

Benefits

- Simplified application deployment
- Flexibility and control for PC users
- Improved PC management

“The new Windows 7 and MDOP environment means that the school board can deploy fixes to virtualized applications and can respond to user requests faster than before.”

Chris Demers, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Manager, London District Catholic School Board

The London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB) serves students in the counties of Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin, including the cities of London, St. Thomas and Woodstock in Ontario, Canada. To deliver a more efficient computing experience for staff and faculty, the LDCSB wanted to centralize its technology processes and develop a more integrated applications environment. With the help of Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner Itergy, the LDCSB standardized on the Windows® 7 operating system and deployed Microsoft Application Virtualization (App-V)—part of the Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack— to help reduce application deployment time. With Windows 7 Enterprise, the school board has simplified IT management, improved security and increased reliability and now benefits from a highly manageable application environment that supports faculty and staff in providing a higher standard of education.

Situation

Located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario, Canada, the London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB) features 48 elementary and eight secondary schools and provides a full range of education experiences from junior kindergarten through to secondary school. Regulated by the Ontario Ministry of Education, Catholic schools – also known as “separate schools” – have a distinct mandate to provide a complete academic program in an environment that integrates learning, religious instruction and spiritual formation into all aspects of the curriculum. LDCSB teachers, administrators and support staff — 3,000 in all — support more than 21,000 Catholic students in the region.

To help deliver strong learning experiences, the LDCSB features an optimized technology environment of 6,300 desktop and notebook computers for teachers and administrators. The school board relies primarily on Microsoft technologies and also supports more than 100 third party and legacy software applications running on the Windows XP operating system.

The LDCSB operated within a disparate IT environment and needed a more efficient and cost-effective way to deploy and manage applications to reduce IT administration costs and improve application access for staff. With staff and teachers using various iterations of Microsoft and third-party business productivity software, the school board needed to standardize on newer technologies such as Microsoft Office 2010 and the Windows 7 Enterprise operating system.

“Staff members were using different software file formats and finding information in the disparate environment was proving to be highly inefficient. This

also made sharing documents and files between groups a huge challenge. We needed a more cohesive and integrated technology environment to provide more efficient service for our users,” says Chris Demers, manager of information technology at the London District Catholic School Board. “We wanted to centralize our solutions and put in place stronger processes for distributing software across our disparate environment.”

The LDCSB was also looking for a more efficient PC management strategy that would allow the IT department to update and manage PCs with software updates and security patches more quickly and effectively. Deploying and managing applications was time consuming and tedious, and the IT team was burdened by a tremendous amount of application-related compatibility issues.

Having used Windows XP for many years, the school board was ready to update its computing infrastructure. Standardizing IT processes is a key challenge, notes Demers. To address these issues, the school board wanted to standardize the application environment and particularly the operating system.

Solution

To improve operational efficiencies, the LDCSB worked with Itergy, a Microsoft technology expert, to centralize and standardize its IT infrastructure on Microsoft software. This included upgrading its desktop operating systems to Windows 7 Enterprise and server operating systems to Windows Server® 2008 R2. The new IT environment allows users to take advantage of DirectAccess, a new feature in Windows 7 Enterprise that gives staff seamless secure access to LDCSB’s network without having to use a virtual private

network. In addition, Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager was utilized to ensure better management of patches, image deployment and software inventories.

The LDCSB is also now using Microsoft Application Virtualization (App-V) — part of the Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack (MDOP) — to help virtualize and dynamically deliver applications across its environment.

“MDOP consists of a suite of six technologies that helped LDCSB improve IT responsiveness and streamline application and desktop management processes,” says Riyaz Lalani, Senior Account Manager, Itegy. “Previously desktop management and application deployment was a consuming task for the School Board. With MDOP, they can now focus their efforts on new projects that can help improve the student experience.”

To date the school board has deployed the upgraded software, including Windows 7 Enterprise, to 300 PCs in one elementary school and two high schools. To speed up and simplify the project, the school board took advantage of automated deployment features in Windows Server 2008, System Center Configuration Manager and the Microsoft Deployment Toolkit 2010. The school board estimates that the entire computing environment of 6,300 PCs will be running Windows 7 by late 2011.

“We had a lot of applications that didn’t work well together and we now have a simpler PC application management strategy,” says Demers. “We’ve been able to use App-V in particular to cost-effectively improve the way we manage desktop applications and deliver them as network services eliminating application to application conflicts.”

Using App-V, the school board virtualized more than 80 applications to date. As new applications and updates need to be deployed, the IT team’s first option is to use App-V to virtualize them. App-V transforms the firm’s desktop applications into centrally managed virtual services that deliver data based on requests from individual client computers, simplifying application life cycle management.

Benefits

Today, the LDCSB is leveraging Windows 7 Enterprise and MDOP as the foundation for its infrastructure upgrade process. The school board is achieving a host of benefits within the standardized IT environment. The new learning environment runs faster than ever on the existing hardware and is delivering improved educational outcomes for students.

Standardizing on Windows 7 Enterprise also enables the school board to manage application compatibility more efficiently—particularly for its productivity software applications previously running on Windows XP. User Account Control, BitLocker™ data encryption, improved security, Group Policy, and other Windows 7 features will enable users to have a more flexible and secure PC experience.

Reduced IT Administration Costs

Using App-V, the school board can reduce the need to test applications for compatibility and can now deploy updates on an as-needed basis. Using Microsoft App-V, Demers notes that the LDCSB can reduce its storage footprint, deploy applications faster, better utilize IT staff, create the opportunity to reduce licensing costs and respond better to the needs of its end-users.

"Today, applications are served to PCs virtually so it is easier and more cost effective for the board to manage applications," says Demers. "We can deploy applications remotely, which means our IT team no longer needs to spend time traveling to the individual schools to address application deployment issues, upgrades and updates. This results in the increased productivity of our team and huge cost-savings for the board."

Simplified application deployment

The school board is using Microsoft App-V to speed application provisioning and reduce application compatibility testing and deployment time. The LDCSB now benefits from reduced image development time and improved software request turnaround.

"Previously, it took us up to 6 months to build and deploy images. Using App-V helped speed migration to Windows 7 Enterprise and Microsoft Office 2010 while also helping us cut our application update time from months to weeks. We are now able to create a more stable computing environment as a result," says Demers.

Flexibility and control for PC users

The LDCSB is taking advantage of Windows 7 Enterprise to help provide improved IT support for its schools. For users, the Windows 7 environment delivers a more powerful, responsive, secure, and easy-to-use system that helps them work more efficiently and effectively. LDCSB found that one of the biggest end-user improvements using Windows 7 Enterprise was speed in all areas: shutdown, boot-up, entering and exiting sleep mode and application processing. In addition, by using DirectAccess, a feature of Windows 7 Enterprise, employees are able to securely connect to the company network via the Internet, rather than through a traditional

virtual private network (VPN) speeding up access to information on the network.

Improved PC management

The LDCSB now benefits from a highly manageable application environment that supports faculty and staff in providing a higher standard of education. In addition to the DirectAccess end-user benefits, DirectAccess allows the IT staff to update Group Policy settings, apply application and operating system updates, monitor PCs, and troubleshoot network problems on distributed PCs any time they are online irrespective of where they are located.

"The new Windows 7 and MDOP environment means that the school board can deploy fixes to virtualized applications and can respond to user requests faster than before," says Demers. "Instead of spending time testing applications for compatibility, we can provision applications at any time and with minimal service interruptions. Standardizing our environment helps us to focus more on ways to improve the educational experience for our students."

For More Information

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For more information about Itergy products and services, visit the website at: <http://www.itergy.com/>

For more information about London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB) products and services, visit the website at: <http://www.ldcsb.on.ca/>



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