

Washington County Public Schools evaluates the new Lexmark C544dn and touts its speed, print quality and ease of maintenance as top of the class.

New Lexmark color laser makes the grade at Maryland's Washington County Public Schools

The Organization

Serving nearly 22,000 students, Maryland's Washington County Public Schools operates 47 schools with 1,700 teachers and 1,300 support staff and administrators. With a fiscal 2009 education budget of more than \$200 million, the county is a leader in using technology to enhance the K-12 learning experience.

The Challenge

When it comes to choosing printers for its classrooms and administrative offices, Washington County is like few other school systems in the country. "We do a lot of testing and hands-on evaluations, to see for ourselves which products are the most reliable, produce the best results, and are the most cost-effective to operate and maintain," said Joni Patterson, Assistant to the Director of Technology.

Patterson is responsible for much of the district's technology product testing, including cell phones, printers and other computer hardware.

In its administrative offices, the district's printers are in near constant use, generating everything from purchase orders and telephone directories to brochures, correspondence, and presentations. In classrooms, printers get a workout printing student projects, Internet pages and school correspondence from teachers to parents. "With our testing, we always look at how quickly the first page prints, how easy it is to load paper and change toner cartridges, and also how quiet it is," said Patterson. "It's got to be easy to use for us to consider putting a printer in the classroom," she said.

Clearly, the Washington County Public Schools knew what it wanted, and didn't want, in a color laser printer.

"The time to first page was very fast, even when printing from sleep mode."

—Joni Patterson
Assistant to the Director of Technology
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The Solution

The district prides itself on being at the forefront of technology offerings and decided to evaluate Lexmark's C544dn prior to its formal public announcement. The network-ready C544dn is compact enough to sit on a desktop yet powerful enough for departments demanding speeds of up to 25 pages per minute in color or monochrome.

Installed on the network in just minutes, the new printer fit nicely on Patterson's desk. She began using it immediately. "The time to first page was very fast, even when printing from sleep mode," she said. "We did a



run of 150 copies of a full-color brochure on plain paper without a single jam. We received a lot of positive feedback from the teachers on the print quality," she said.

A unique feature of the C544dn is the front-panel USB-port. Users can simply plug-in a USB flash drive containing image (.gif, .jpeg, .jpg, .bmp, .png, .tiff, .tif, .pcx, and .dcm) or .pdf files, view the files on the LCD display, and print selected files – without a computer. "Printing directly from a USB flash drive without needing a computer is a huge timesaver for printing photos or student projects," said Patterson.

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Another feature Patterson used to shrink paper consumption was multi-up printing which reduces page images to fit four pages onto a single sheet of paper. The optional duplex unit for two-sided printing, saves resources and money. In fact when Patterson printed a telephone directory that is usually 24 pages using the new Lexmark C544dn, she was able to cut the number of pages in half by printing the directory in a booklet format. "We made several hundred copies of this directory, so we saved a lot of paper," she said.

Patterson also highlighted how easy it is to change the toner cartridges since they load from the side of the printer. She also said that even though it was right on her desk, it was quiet enough not to disturb her work.

For network administrators, the C544dn features an embedded Web server that provides access to printer usage statistics, configuration settings, toner levels, operating status, and more. The printer can also be configured to send an e-mail message as supplies get low, when paper needs to be added, or when other alert conditions occur.

The Results

With the Lexmark C544dn, Washington County Public Schools has found a color laser printer that delivers brilliant color images and crisp text at up to 25 pages per minute in a quiet, compact unit capable of standing up to the rigors of near-continual use in the office and in the classroom. With its toner cartridges designed for easy replacement and front-loading paper tray, the user-friendly C544dn will be at home in individual classrooms and administrative offices throughout the county.