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Director of Technology & Information Services
Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS)

Hundreds of Thousands Saved Makes Computrace a "No Brainer" for Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

The core mission for Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) is to eliminate achievement gaps and ensure that all students reach a high level of success. To foster student achievement, the district firmly believes in integrating technology into instruction. As such, it launched a 1:1 computing program in 2007. KCKPS has since seen great gains in student success.

To help ensure student safety and achieve approval from the school board, KCKPS selected Computrace® by Absolute® Software to protect its 1:1 computers. By recovering stolen computers and benefiting from the product's Service Guarantee, the district has saved over \$100,000. It also estimates that hundreds of thousands have been saved thanks to the product's theft deterrence qualities.

1:1 Computing to Enhance Learning

KCKPS looked to establish a 1:1 computing program that would provide 6,000 Apple computers to its students and teachers. Underlying this initiative was a desire to extend learning opportunities beyond the regular school day, and so the proposed program allowed students to take their laptops home each night. This approach came with inherent security concerns, however, and the district knew that before the program could be implemented, two key elements were required: a comprehensive computer security strategy to help ensure student safety; and approval from parents, the community and the school board.

Student Safety – A Primary Concern

When first told of plans for the 1:1 program, the school, parents, and the local community voiced a common concern: that of student safety. With computers come theft and the misdemeanors that surround it. What if students were bullied to hand over their laptop? Would the program attract thieves? And how could an already tight IT budget overcome the sunken costs of loss due to theft? For KCKPS, proving that these concerns were addressed was a crucial step in gaining approval.

Selecting a Security Solution to Ease Concerns

Joe Fives, Director of Technology & Information Services for KCKPS, knew that a comprehensive computer security solution was a solid first step in easing concerns of student safety. After evaluating a number of products, he selected Computrace – an IT asset management, data protection and theft recovery solution by Absolute Software. As Fives explains, "We selected Computrace because of its reputation, functionality and performance. It has a great reputation in the computer theft recovery category, and we knew that it had worked well for similar 1:1 programs. Absolute also has a lot of experience in the education space – so we knew it was a good fit to protect our laptops."

Computrace tracks computers via any internet connection, regularly collecting asset information from each device regardless of its physical location. This allows administrators to keep track of

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where computers are located, who is using them, and what's installed on them. These benefits in themselves assist in lowering management costs and deterring theft. In the event of theft, the Absolute Theft Recovery Team uses this asset information to track the stolen computer, and then works closely with local police to recover the device. Absolute maintains the industry's highest computer theft recovery rate.

Fives was also drawn to the ease at which Computrace could be installed. Tight resources meant that any technology selected needed to be quick and inexpensive to implement. Because Computrace is delivered over the internet as a software-as-a-service, it requires no additional infrastructure and is rapidly deployable. The product's installation process was also extremely compatible with the school's imaging process for its Apple computers.

"Computrace is a very easy product to deploy in large numbers," Fives notes, "so it eased concerns of a long, complicated implementation process. We were literally done installation in a matter of days."

Spreading the Word About Computrace

Once Computrace was selected, KCKPS shifted focus to gaining support from the district's main stakeholders. As part of these efforts, Fives worked to ensure that both the school and local community were educated on Computrace and its theft recovery capabilities.

KCKPS promoted Computrace not only as a reliable recourse for theft, but also, a valuable theft deterrent. The district opted to put StopTheft stickers on each machine to remind potential thieves that tracking software was in place.

Fives continues, "People were worried, for example, that students would get beat up for their laptops. We could then say that all students need to do is hand over the laptop and move to safety. We are confident in the Absolute Theft Recovery Team – we know we will get the machine back.

"Once everyone learned exactly what Computrace could do, it completely alleviated the stakeholders' fears. We showed that we had addressed the issue of theft – and this allowed us to focus on the other challenges to overcome for a successful 1:1 program."

Computrace Secures School Board Approval

A final step to gain the school board's approval, KCKPS needed to show how it would effectively manage program costs. How could they be reassured that laptops would be recovered if stolen? The Absolute Service Guarantee became an important element in proving the school's cost accountability. If Absolute is unable to recover a stolen computer, the customer is eligible to receive up to \$1,000.¹

"Computrace drastically reduces liability for the district – we either recover the computer or use the Service Guarantee to help with costs for the program," Fives explains. "This is what the board needed to hear. First, we addressed the matter of theft, and then, we were able to show what was in place to alleviate cost concerns. Ultimately, the board approved our decision. I am certain that, without Computrace there to prove our accountability, this program would never have passed."

¹ Certain conditions apply. For full terms, see www.absolute.com/Service_Guarantee.pdf

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Computrace in Action

Soon after the 1:1 program was launched, Absolute Software was given the opportunity to prove its theft recovery capabilities. Two students were carjacked, and thieves made away with the vehicle and the school-issued laptops that were in the backseat. Word of the incident spread, along with the district's PR campaign surrounding Computrace tracking capabilities. This proved effective – in fear of getting caught, the thieves dumped the laptops later that night. Both computers were returned to the school the following day. "The tool itself is very effective," Fives says, "both as a recovery aid and as a deterrent!"

Hundreds of Thousands Saved Makes Computrace a "No Brainer"

KCKPS has realized substantial cost savings since implementing Computrace. Fives estimates that the combination of the product's theft recovery capabilities and Service Guarantee has saved the district over \$100,000. "That number alone shows that Computrace is a no brainer for schools," he says.

Moreover, he explains that this figure only accounts for the measurable savings – Computrace has derived immense value from its ability to deter theft. "If you factor how many thefts people's knowledge of Computrace has prevented, I can easily say that Computrace has saved us hundreds of thousands of dollars – if not a figure closer to a million.

"With Computrace in place, we're able to focus on integrating technology into instruction – not theft."

About Absolute Computrace

Absolute Computrace by Absolute Software allows organizations to centrally track and secure their IT assets within a single cloud-based console – the Absolute Customer Center. They can easily identify computers and ultra-portable devices that have gone missing, enforce software policies, and maintain a fleet of optimally running devices. Most importantly, they can remotely invoke preemptive or reactive security measures to safeguard each device and the data it contains.

About Absolute Software

Absolute Software is the global leader in firmware-embedded persistent endpoint security and management solutions.

We provide organizations with comprehensive visibility and control over all of their endpoints – regardless of user or location. Our customers are able to optimize productivity, reduce operating costs, prove compliance, and remotely secure all of their devices and the corporate data they contain.



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