

# Spokane Public School District

Spokane Schools replaces proprietary test scoring system with Lexmark Testing and Grading solution

## Challenge

In cutting its 2009-2010 budget by \$8.6 million to \$305 million, the Spokane Public School District, like other districts nationwide, is learning to live with bigger class sizes and cutbacks in administrative services. In its quest to avoid making deeper cuts, the district has become a leader in aggressively hunting for places where money can be saved through procedural updates and equipment modernization. Administering and scoring student exams quickly became a key target.

For years, the district purchased optical mark recognition forms, better known as bubble sheets, on which students mark test answers that are optically scanned for electronic test scoring. Initially focusing on the district's 12 secondary schools, executive director of technology and information services Ken Brown first switched from proprietary scanners that used expensive pre-printed bubble sheets to an online system. Though an improvement, the online system charged a considerable flat annual fee that led to a high cost per page when the system was not heavily used. "We believed an online solution would give us more flexibility, but its cost was clearly becoming an issue," said Brown. "We needed flexibility, affordability and ease of use." A new solution would also need to be fully integrated into the district's student information system.

Already using Lexmark as the district's primary supplier of printers, Brown asked about other solutions for the K-12 educational environment. "Initially, we were not looking to replace this online system—we had only recently converted to it; but Lexmark had exactly what we needed for test generation and scoring," Brown said.

## Solution

To prepare and score tests for more than 15,000 students, Spokane Schools purchased and installed the Lexmark Testing and Grading solution in its 12 secondary schools, with plans to expand into all 34 elementary schools. This comprehensive, customizable hardware and software solution is based on Lexmark's multifunction products (MFPs) that combine laser printer, copier, scanner and fax into a single, compact, easily managed unit.

Using the included server-based software, teachers and administrators prepare tests and print bubble sheets on plain paper, eliminating costly pre-printed forms while gaining full control over forms design. Later, they use the same Lexmark MFPs to scan and automatically score the test sheets. It is no longer necessary to collect thousands of test sheets and carry them to a central location for scanning. Scanning the test sheets in each school ensures that test results are available in just minutes. With Lexmark's powerful scripting tools, scanned information is also seamlessly routed to the district's SASI® and PowerSchool® student information systems.



## Meet Spokane Public School District

The public school system of Spokane, Wash. educates 29,000 students who speak 44 different languages. The district operates 46 schools with a staff of 4,000 that includes 1,800 teachers.



“The Lexmark Testing and Grading solution has made it easy to create centrally distributed standardized tests for the entire district and it allows individual teachers to create tests based on their own lesson plans,” said Brown. In addition to this new level of flexibility, the cost of purchasing the Lexmark MFPs and their ability to print bubble sheets on plain paper has lowered overall operating costs significantly.

### Results

With the Lexmark Testing and Grading solution now fully installed in 12 secondary schools, the district eliminated the annual \$70,000 fee it was paying the previous vendor. “Once we implemented the Lexmark solution at the secondary level, we eliminated that annual cost, replacing it with the much more economical Lexmark maintenance plan, giving us a savings exceeding \$60,000,” said Brown.

“After we add the 34 elementary schools next year, compared with a full districtwide implementation of our older solution we are saving more than \$125,000 annually.”

In addition to generating impressive savings, Spokane’s teachers are now enjoying greater flexibility in test preparation along with faster reporting and improved system reliability.

Throughout the entire project, Lexmark personnel were available, often on-site, to ensure that MFPs were installed in optimal locations and that integration with the district’s IT systems was problem-free. “The entire Lexmark team, from sales to engineering, are easy to work with, always willing to listen us and ready to come here anytime and work with us on-site,” said Brown.

Lexmark also understands that the conclusion of the deployment phase does not mean the end of the customer relationship. “Lexmark continues to be very responsive to our needs and questions,” said Brown. “As we plan for the future, the Lexmark account team continually keeps us informed about future products to make sure we are on the right path.”

In economically demanding times, solutions that enhance productivity while simultaneously cutting expenses and improving reliability are especially valuable. Even though Washington’s Spokane Public School District had only recently turned to an online testing solution, it believed that by purchasing, operating and maintaining its own system, teachers, students and the bottom line would all benefit. For Spokane Schools, the Lexmark Testing and Grading solution is the right answer.

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Executive Director of Technology and Information Services  
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