AirWatch Secures and Manages 13,000 iPads for Mansfield's 1:1 Mobile Device Deployment

The Client

Located just outside of Dallas, Texas, Mansfield Independent School District (ISD) is home to 30,000 students and spans 42 campuses. Since 2012, Mansfield ISD has successfully deployed 13,000 mobile devices, secured by AirWatch® by VMware®, to teachers and students. The district is considered a leader in mobility by other schools in the region.

The Challenge

For the seven high schools in the district, the pros of 'going mobile' heavily outweighed the cons. Lynn Phears, the network security manager for Mansfield ISD, vetted three enterprise mobility management (EMM) providers before selecting AirWatch. "We partnered with AirWatch because of the solution's simplicity and user friendliness," said Phears. "I was also impressed with how quickly my questions were addressed by the AirWatch support team."

Phears played an integral role in the large rollout of devices. "High school students are doing nearly everything on their iPads® these days," she said. "Our students are taking classroom tests and completing homework from their mobile devices, both inside the classroom and out. They're also listening to music or reading books in their downtime. We wanted to enable students to use technology to learn, while keeping our fleet of devices secure." The 1:1 deployment was greeted with excitement when the iPads were first introduced, but today the students see their iPads as more tool than toy. "The iPads are no longer shiny distractions to play with," Phears said. "The students view them as tools they can actually use to get work done."

The Solution

Prior to the district-wide deployment, Mansfield's IT team configured each device with a global proxy profile to prevent browsing to inappropriate sites on the school-owned devices while students are in the classroom and at home. Phears and her team also set profiles to disable iMessage, restrict access to inappropriate movies and books, and blacklist prohibited applications. "We use the AirWatch® App Catalog to push our recommended applications to students and staff," Phears said. Recommendations range from a free

Solution Overview

- Client: Mansfield ISD
- Industry: Education
- Geography: North America
- Features: MDM, MAM, MEM
- Devices: 10,000 – 15,000

calculator, a dictionary, and flashcard applications to Evernote, a note-taking app. Mansfield also uses the Apple® Volume Purchase Program to purchase and distribute applications like Pages, Keynote and GoodReader in bulk to deployed devices.

In order to use the devices, students must abide by the rules. "If a student attempts to remove a mobile device management profile or violates the compliance policies we have in place, we send them a push notification to alert them," said Phears. If the device continues to be non-compliant, the on-site technician takes a more hands-on approach, requiring the user to comply manually or taking the device away from the student. "Through AirWatch and the compliance reporting, we can tell which students have un-enrolled their devices or are out of compliance," she noted.

As a leader in mobility, Mansfield ISD continuously seeks to improve the process of deploying devices to its students. "Kids are constantly a step ahead when it comes to adopting new technology," said Phears of her tech-savvy students. "We need the ability to keep up with them and AirWatch helps us do that." Mansfield is one of a limited number of schools that has been actively beta testing the new device enrollment program (DEP) from Apple. DEP addresses the mass configuration needs of organizations purchasing and deploying devices in large quantities, without the need for factory customization or pre-configuration of devices prior to deployment. Mansfield has 22 devices enrolled via the new method and Phears is excited to enroll more devices into the program. "The Device Enrollment Program from Apple will help us immensely," she said. "It's going to be great once we have all our iPads in the program. No longer having to tether and touch each individual device is going to make my job a lot easier."

Up Next

Mansfield plans to roll out additional laptops to all high school teachers and is considering a program to put iPads in the hands of 7th and 8th grade students in the school district. "We're very interested in AirWatch® Teacher Tools," Phears said. "It gives the teachers in the classroom more control and it looks really simple to use." Single App Mode during testing has also garnered significant interest from the school district. Single App Mode will help to ensure students remain on task during testing and assignments.

"We partnered with AirWatch because of the solution's simplicity and user friendliness. I was also impressed with how quickly my questions were addressed by the AirWatch support team."

– Lynn Phears
Network Security Manager
Mansfield ISD