



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

INDUSTRY: EDUCATION

**CHALLENGE**

- Educational institutions have limited IT resources
- Application deployment requires multiple lengthy installations
- School computers can become cluttered with application files and registries, negatively affecting performance
- Application troubleshooting a complex and time-consuming process
- Faculty and staff don't have the bandwidth for lengthy downtime
- Computers are becoming more entrenched in day to day educational system

**RESULTS**

- VMware ThinApp lets small IT staffs "do more with less"
- Applications can be packaged once, deployed multiple times
- VMware ThinApp's zero footprint allows computers to run faster and have a longer usable life
- Streamlined IT troubleshooting enables IT department to handle 20 percent more tech support issues
- VMware ThinApp provides flexibility in deployment to help extend the life of current systems and cut overall costs

*"ThinApp's zero runtime execution keeps our computers from getting cluttered up with a lot of application junk, since we just put a small, simple executable on the computer. Keeping our computers 'clean' keeps them running faster, so that we can extend their lifespan—which is important when you don't have a huge technology budget at your disposal."*

—Jon Graves, Technology Services Coordinator, Walton County Public Schools

## Walton County Public Schools

VMware ThinApp Eliminates Installation Headaches at Public School System

### Company Overview

Located in Walton County, Georgia, Walton County Public Schools (WCPS) consists of nine elementary, three middle, and two high schools plus one alternative school, a performance learning center, and the Walton Career Academy. The school system serves approximately 12,800 students and has nearly 2,000 employees.

### The Challenge

Like most schools systems, WCPS doesn't have an enormous IT department working behind the scenes to maintain its technical infrastructure—the organization relies on an IT staff of approximately 11 people.

"We run a very lean machine," said Jon Graves, Technology Services Coordinator at WCPS. "In an educational environment, it's just a given that there won't be a lot of extra resources to throw around, so you have to figure out ways to work smarter."

One area that WCPS sought to improve was the process of deploying applications to students and teachers within the school system. In the past, this had been a time-consuming process fraught with IT headaches.

"If a teacher needed a specific education application, we'd have to physically install it on their desktop," said Graves. "The more programs we installed on a computer, the slower it would get, and the more easily the application would get corrupted. When that happened, we would have to either reload the application, which took a long time, or we would have to totally wipe out the computer and reload Windows on it. And that really took a lot of time."

Lacking the deep pockets that many corporations have at their disposal, WCPS wasn't able to avoid the problem of cluttered, easily corrupted computers by simply upgrading to faster, more powerful computers. "We have to make our computers last until they die," said Graves.

### The Solution

VMware ThinApp, an application virtualization solution that allows applications to run without any modifications or additions to a PC, caught WCPS's attention as a potential solution to the challenges they were facing.

"I was intrigued by the idea of an application running in its own shell," said Graves. "It was a concept that made a lot of sense."

WCPS immediately began looking into some of the application virtualization solutions on the market, and found VMware ThinApp to be the most compelling choice.

"I researched offerings from Microsoft, SoftGrid and Altiris, but none of them looked as good as ThinApp," said Graves. "I liked the fact that ThinApp worked without the need for additional client agents or backend servers. Also, the VMware name was a strong selling point—they're pretty much the pioneers of the virtualization space."

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## The Results

By encapsulating entire applications within a single EXE file, ThinApp provides easy access to whatever applications WCPS students and teachers need to run—with no installation required. The IT department simply puts an EXE on a server and provides users with a shortcut to double-click, allowing the application to run as if it was installed on the computer.

“A great example of how ThinApp has helped us is with AutoCAD, which we need to install on 30 to 60 computers at the beginning of each year for some of the classes that we offer,” said Graves. “AutoCAD is a pretty heavy-duty application, and it can be a bit tricky to get it installed and configured properly. But with ThinApp, we just package once, and deploy multiple times. We can get 60 users up and running on AutoCAD with no problems at all.”

Just as importantly, VMware ThinApp does not leave a footprint on endpoint devices. It allows applications to run directly from a compressed state without first caching data to the hard disk, enhancing performance and data security and eliminating single points of failure.

“ThinApp’s zero runtime execution keeps our computers from getting cluttered up with a lot of application junk, since we just put a small, simple executable on the computer,” said Graves. “Keeping our computers ‘clean’ keeps them running faster, so that we can extend their lifespan—which is important when you don’t have a huge technology budget at your disposal.”

Additionally, ThinApp’s isolated, per-user, per-application “sandboxes” makes application troubleshooting much easier for WCPS’s IT staff. “If a computer starts to run slow or act funny, we don’t have to spend a lot of time trying to fix the application or figure out what a user has done to their settings. We just delete the sandbox, and we are back to a fresh start. The sandbox is part of what makes ThinApp so great.”

This ease of troubleshooting has enabled WCPS’s IT department to handle 20 percent more technical support calls without feeling overwhelmed—and without having to add staff. “We hear about a problem, walk in, and within just a couple minutes, we are walking out,” said Graves. “After deleting the sand box, our work is done. It’s terrific.”

## The Future

For WCPS, ThinApp has been a success that they plan to expand upon to continue realizing the benefits of application virtualization.

“As time goes on, I would like for us to push ThinApp out to even more computers within the school system and use it in as many scenarios as possible,” said Graves. “Application virtualization just makes sense—as far as I’m concerned, it’s the way of the future.”

**VMware, Inc. 3401 Hillview Ave., Palo Alto CA, 94304 USA Tel 877-486-9273 Fax 650-427-5001**

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