

Case study

Miami-Dade County Public Schools



Fourth-largest U.S. school district relies on HP for 1:1 mobile device program

Industry

K-12 Education

Objective

Overcome digital divide in large, diverse school district

Approach

Carefully plan and launch 1:1 mobile device program including infrastructure upgrades, professional development, and laptop deployment

IT matters

- Align technology with academic goals
- Deploy approximately 172,000 devices over five years
- Image mobile devices with digital learning resources

Business matters

- Level access playing field for low-income students
- Ensure program success through planning and strategy support
- Engage students in collaboration and critical thinking



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—Dr. Sylvia J. Diaz, Assistant Superintendent, Innovation and School Choice, Office of Academics and Transformation, Miami-Dade County Public Schools



Miami-Dade County Public Schools is the fourth-largest school district in the United States, with 460 schools, 40,000 employees, and 345,000 students. Its highly diverse student population hails from more than 100 countries, speaking many languages in addition to English, which include Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, French, and Russian. Many students in the Miami-Dade school district grow up in low-income households. To level the opportunity playing field, Miami-Dade five years ago launched a 1:1 mobile device program, working with HP Partner United Data Technologies (UDT) to place HP laptops in students' hands.

Overcoming the digital divide

Miami-Dade faces challenges common across many U.S. school districts—as well as some unique ones. In the 2017-2018 academic year, 66% of Miami-Dade students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, an indicator of economic need. Meanwhile, changing Miami demographics call for more multi-language instruction, placing an additional strain on budgets.

What's more, the national tragedy of school shootings requires districts nationwide to devote precious dollars to physical security.

Amid these challenges, Miami-Dade remains committed to the success of all students.

"It's an equity issue for us," says Dr. Sylvia J. Diaz, the district's assistant superintendent of innovation and school choice in the office of academics and transformation. "In Miami, we have a lot of poor and immigrant students. Some come from homes with few books, while others are surrounded by books. Schools can level the playing field. We hold high expectations for instructional rigor and student engagement. Technology supports that—not just as a textbook replacement, but as a means to communicate, collaborate, conduct research, and prepare for life after school."

Digital convergence requires careful planning

When Alberto M. Carvalho became superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools in 2008, the district faced severe financial difficulties. Since then, the district has won top national honors for financial/fiscal management. Carvalho and his management team also have spearheaded digital innovation on behalf of educational excellence.

"I grew up in abject poverty, so through that lens I see myself in a lot of the kids in our school systems across America," Carvalho once told *EdTech* magazine. "You can't deliver a modern and relevant education without incorporating technology."¹

Having seen other large school districts falter from inadequate preparation, Miami-Dade spent two years laying the groundwork for what it calls "digital convergence." The district upgraded its wireless infrastructure—using

federal E-rate funding—to accommodate the coming influx of mobile devices and newly acquired digital resources such as digital textbook content and collaboration tools. It carefully planned deployment strategies, including overcoming possible barriers to teacher use of the devices, and conducted extensive professional development sessions preparing teachers to use computers effectively for instruction.

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All of this took a community-wide commitment from the school board, administrators, IT specialists, and instructors. HP Partner UDT provided key guidance and support.

"HP brings solution expertise to the education market and has positioned itself with strong partners who understand local community needs," Diaz says. "UDT played a significant role in our planning and strategy—and today continues to handle everything from imaging our devices to deployment logistics, maintenance, and disposition at end of life."

Over the years, Miami-Dade has invested heavily in digital content and research databases. The 1:1 mobile device program enables it to use these resources to full advantage. UDT took shipment of the devices and imaged them with the chosen software. This includes math applications and a game-based learning platform with standards-aligned content across K-12 subjects.

"UDT rolled the devices into our schools ready to go—plug and play," Diaz says.

Miami-Dade launched its 1:1 mobile device program in 2013, starting with 7th grade civics and 9th grade world history classes. Before that, its student-to-computer ratio had been 3:1, with most devices located in labs or libraries. With the program, the district could place PCs in students' hands at the point of instruction, the classroom.



The HP ProBook x360 11 G3 Education Edition features fast, powerful performance and robust built-in security capabilities.



The HP devices the district has deployed have changed over the years as Miami-Dade refined its requirements. Today it standardizes on the HP ProBook x360 11 G3 Education Edition, featuring fast, powerful performance and robust built-in security capabilities.

“It’s a durable, rugged device that can be a tablet, but it has a full keyboard and it runs Microsoft Windows,” Diaz says. “Standardization enables us to manage the process and costs of massive rollouts. It also provides consistency as students and staff move from school to school.”

The district has purchased and deployed over 150,000 HP devices to students and teachers over the past five years. HP Care Pack 5-Year Pickup and Return Service, provided by UDT, keeps the devices running in peak condition without burdening district IT staff. The district also has HP desktop PCs in its environment, usually purchased with schools’ discretionary funds, as well as HP printers.

Transforming the classroom experience

Miami-Dade’s 1:1 mobile devices are found mostly in middle schools and high schools. The elementary schools use devices of various types on carts. Middle school students leave their PCs at school, while high school students can take them home.

Now starting its second five-year program cycle, the district is seeing a transformed educational experience contributing to higher student engagement and achievement.

“UDT has been a wonderful partner. They sat us down from the beginning and helped us think about the deployment, and plan for every contingency.”

– Dr. Sylvia J. Diaz, Assistant Superintendent, Innovation and School Choice, Office of Academics and Transformation, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

“Students use these devices in a variety of ways,” Diaz says. “They might be accessing a website with activities. They might be writing or creating a presentation. In middle grade civics classes, they take progress-monitoring tests in tablet mode, so teachers can track progress and adjust instruction as needed. They Skype with experts and guest speakers. It’s not just about content delivery. It’s about collaboration, problem solving, and critical thinking.”

Customer at a glance

Application

1:1 mobile device program

Hardware

• HP ProBook x360 11 G3 Education Edition

Services

• HP Care Pack 5-Year Pickup and Return Service

Diaz's advice to other school districts is to "plan, plan, plan." Know what you aim to accomplish. Tie technology strategies to academic goals. Prepare holistically—all the way from infrastructure to instructional tools and training.

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"We're going to continue to deploy classroom technologies and lean on our partner organizations like HP and UDT to help us do that in ways that make sense, are cost effective, and that work in our environment without a lot of lift," Diaz says. "Do we think technology replaces teachers? Absolutely not. The most important thing in a classroom is the relationship between teacher and student. But technology can help you be a better teacher."

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¹ <https://edtechmagazine.com/k12/article/2018/12/qa-superintendent-alberto-carvalho-how-plan-digital-innovation>

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