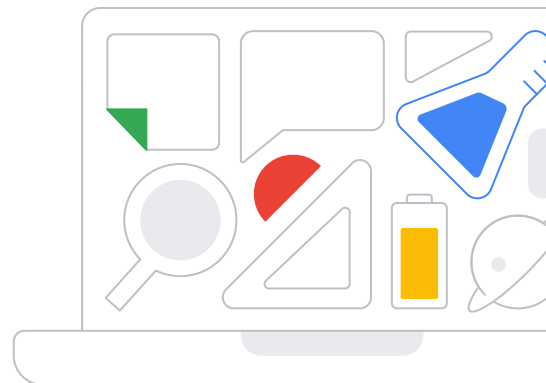


At Cypress Fairbanks School District, ChromeOS Flex devices fit in everywhere, anytime



Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District (CFISD) is the third-largest school district in Texas, with 96 campuses, 19,000 teachers, and staff serving over 118,000 students.

When Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District (CFISD) invests in technology, the district chooses long-lasting learning solutions. During the pandemic, CFISD upgraded 50,000 devices with ChromeOS Flex so students could learn remotely.

In the years since, CFISD has continued to use the refreshed computers for summer programs, math camps, and financial aid signup sessions for parents—gaining even more value for their investment.

Fast, easy ramp-up to ChromeOS Flex when students need devices

The value of easily managed devices became clear when students needed devices for remote learning. While the district had Windows laptops to distribute to students, IT leaders worried about managing and securing data, as well as setting aside budget for future devices.

“It’s very costly to have to continue to purchase new devices all the time,” says Charles Franklin, Assistant Superintendent of Technology and Information Services at CFISD. “And once PCs can’t be upgraded any longer, they become a security risk.” Outdated devices might not allow the operating systems to be upgraded or patched, which means security vulnerabilities would remain on the devices.

When the district started its 1:1 program, Franklin and his colleagues used ChromeOS Flex to convert Windows devices into devices running ChromeOS. “We wouldn’t have been able to roll out the 1:1 program as fast as we did if it weren’t for ChromeOS Flex,” says Douglas Baker, Manager of the district’s Technology Service Center.

The lower cost associated with ChromeOS Flex was also a factor in the shift away from the Windows operating system—as was the need to close security gaps.

“Knowing that we can extend the life of a working device is a big plus about ChromeOS Flex,” Baker says.

With features like a read-only OS that blocks executables, data encryption, sandboxing—as well as the ability to remote-wipe a lost device—ChromeOS protects staff and student data from threats like ransomware.



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Assistant Superintendent of Technology and Information Services at CFISD



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Douglas Baker

Manager, District Technology Service Center

Bringing easily managed devices to summer programs

After seeing the value of ChromeOS Flex for devices in the 1:1 program, Baker and Franklin looked for opportunities to use ChromeOS Flex in other settings. The district's summer program was a smart match for ChromeOS Flex. Students could log in and gain access to Google Workspace for Education tools like Classroom, Docs and Slides needed for classes, saving files in the cloud as needed. The district's IT team can also manage all ChromeOS and ChromeOS Flex devices through Google Admin console, setting policies based on user groups, "Typically we don't have thousands of Chromebooks just at the ready, but we do have thousands of Windows devices available," Baker says. In total, Baker and his team have converted 50,000 computers into ChromeOS Flex devices, helping move devices from shelves into the hands of learners.

The programs in which ChromeOS Flex devices have been used include two-week summer camps, longer-term summer school programs, and math camps. Equipping so many different groups with computers would normally become an IT headache: updating device software, wiping files, and enabling new logins. With ChromeOS Flex, however, the devices are updated automatically; since students' files are in the cloud, there's no need to wipe computers.

"ChromeOS Flex is easy to install," Baker says.

"I can put Flex on 30 flash drives, set up a wall of devices, get people in the room, and we can create 1,500 Flex devices in a couple of weeks."

Baker and his IT colleagues can also create separate user groups in the Google Admin console for summer devices versus Chromebooks for full-time students in the district. The summer devices may be in use by students from other CFISD schools or even other districts.

96 campuses

19,00 teachers, and over 118,000 students

50,000 computers

converted into ChromeOS Flex devices throughout COVID

1,500 Flex devices

converted in a matter of weeks

The uses for ChromeOS devices cases multiply

Word has gotten around the district about the supply of ChromeOS Flex devices. In the past, schools rarely had extra laptops for activities outside of classroom learning during the regular school year. Today, with ChromeOS Flex devices, the district always has a backstock of computers available.

"We get lots of random requests," says Derly Buentello, Technical Analyst at CFISD. "When school starts up in the fall, we set up a room with computers that parents can use to fill out all the paperwork necessary for admission. This also becomes a good opportunity for us to direct them towards any school aid programs they might be eligible for."

"Knowing that we can make a project like a summer camp happen with ChromeOS Flex is a good insurance plan," Franklin says. "Having Flex in our back pocket has been really helpful."



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