



Case Study

A Very Cost-Effective Option for Top Student Technology

"I have had some school districts look at our equipment and they ask where we got it. I tell them that we have been very happy with Nor-Tech and their partnership with Lenovo."

Jason Smidt, Director of Technology, Brookings School District

About Brookings

Located in Brookings, S.D., Brookings School District is an outstanding K-12 organization. It fosters an innovative teaching and learning environment that supports quality learning and excellent outcomes. Goals include maintaining fiscal stability, accountability and alignment through effective financial practices.

Their Challenge

Craig Solomon, Nor-Tech Senior Field Account Executive, has been working with Brookings School District since 2011, providing the organization with a variety of smartly designed, powerful Lenovo laptops and mobile charging carts.

When Brookings first considered Craig's recommendation to lease their technology in 2013, there was discussion about not wanting to be locked in for three years. Some stakeholders wanted to go with significantly less expensive Chromebooks.

Craig explained why Chromebooks are not a good option for middle schools and high schools in particular. "Students need more powerful technology that can support options, such as software that prepares them for the real world," he said. "They need more than just what is available in the cloud through Chromebooks"

In 2013, the district started having a conversation about moving to one device per student. That is an option that is too expensive for most school districts and this is where leasing came in. Craig was a key resource throughout the decision-making process. "We negotiated a fair market value lease for them," Craig said. "This allowed them to have enough money to outfit all of the schools."

Craig has been working with Jason Smidt, the district's Director of Technology, "We always wanted devices with hard drives," Jason explained. "We felt that it would be easier. We did have Chromebooks at one time, but there were huge issues. They were difficult to repair and the number that went down was just crazy. That was it for us."

Our Solution

When they contacted Craig most recently, the three-year lease on their existing Lenovo laptops was just about to expire and they were interested in renewing.

"One device per student would normally be an option that some smaller school districts cannot afford," Craig said. "But Jason and other stakeholders in the school district were very



happy with the previous lease arrangement so this was a fairly easy decision for them to make. It significantly increased their budget power.”

But before moving forward with new technology and a new lease, Nor-Tech conducted an assessment to discuss Brookings experience with the previous three-year lease. Nor-Tech wanted to know how the devices held up, how many service requests there were, etc. in the previous three years. Because there tend to be many service requests with school technology, Craig suggested going with laptops designed for education and built to military specifications to make them more rugged. Nor-Tech also bundled a premier warranty service program.

Working with Craig and Lenovo Financial Services, Brookings ended up leasing 1,100 laptops and additional mobile carts. The district also used their technology budget to purchase mobile devices out right for the lower grades. but they not purchase or lease any Chromebooks.

“For the one-to-one devices, we decided to lease because it was \$900,000,” Jason said. “We wanted to break that up into three years to fit in our budget. The other nice thing about the lease is that they are always under warranty. If we pay a little more we can buy them back for \$1 each at the end of the lease.”

Their Success

In addition to Lenovo’s leasing option, and perhaps more important, is the responsiveness of Lenovo’s service department. “We used to be all HP, including printers,” Jason said. “HP support took a while. Lenovo support is fantastic, we send something back in a box and the next day we have it back. Lenovo support is hands down the best support of any other technology provider we have worked with. Lenovo dedicated a person just to our account.”

During the first three-year lease, the district did have some hard drive failures. “It was a combination of a few different things, including the fact that the laptops didn’t have solid state drives.” Jason said. “High school students can just be tough on technology, but Lenovo was very responsive. But we got a lot smarter this year. We bought a sturdier version with SSD drives and with a rugged sleeve.”

As far as Jason’s experience with Nor-Tech, he has been more than pleased. “Craig always gets back the day of and always goes the extra mile to find devices that fit our needs,” he said. “I just tell him what my problem is and he will ask his tech people to help out.

He continued, “I would definitely recommend Nor-Tech and, in fact, have. I have had some school districts look at our equipment and they ask where we got it. I tell them that we have been very happy with Nor-Tech and their partnership with Lenovo.”

Craig concluded, “Jason and the entire Brookings team have always been a pleasure to work with. They take the time to consider all options and thoughtfully make the best technology solutions for their students. It just makes sense that this mindset extends to all aspects of the district and is largely responsible for their continued excellence.”

Lenovo’s Lease Option

So why do many school districts, such as Brookings, choose Lenovo’s lease option?

1. The Ability to be Competitive and Productive: Leasing enables schools to stay on top of technological advances to maximize productivity and effectiveness. This means there is no risk of obsolete technology and the hassle of complying with e-waste disposal regulations.
2. Predictable Expenses: School districts spread costs across the lifetime of their solution, replacing large upfront expenses with lower monthly payments. Monthly (or other periodic) payments can be tailored to budget levels or revenue streams. Some school districts may qualify for tax and accounting advantages as well.
3. Ability to Bundle Costs: Lease financing can cover all aspects of the solution, including hardware, software and services, from Lenovo and other vendors.

4. Lower Upfront Costs: Schools can acquire the solution they need immediately even if the current budget won't allow an outright cash purchase. Lease financing may preserve working capital and existing credit lines, freeing up cash for other operational expenses.

5. Flexible Pay Structures: Lenovo's lease financing provides flexibility that up-front purchasing does not offer, such as: 100% financing with no money down, payment structures that match cash flows or budget cycles and a variety of end-of-lease options.

Ask Nor-Tech about all of Lenovo's financing options.

About Nor-Tech

Nor-Tech built its reputation on the industry's easiest-to-deploy cluster solutions and guaranteed no wait time support. The company designed and built the HPC cluster that enabled the first detection of a gravitational wave—a discovery destined to change history. In addition to HPC clusters, Nor-Tech's custom technology includes workstations, desktops, and servers for a range of applications including CAE, CFD, and FEA. Clients include some of the most respected organizations in the world. Nor-Tech engineers average 20+ years of experience and are responsible for significant high performance computing innovations. Nor-Tech is also a premier partner with major technology manufacturers such as, Lenovo, HP and Dell. The company has been in business since 1998 and is headquartered in Burnsville, Minn. just outside of Minneapolis. To contact Nor-Tech call 952-808-1000/toll free: 877-808-1010 or visit <http://www.nor-tech.com>. Full release at: <http://www.nor-tech.com/category/news/>

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