

Education

Transforming the **student experience** with technology

Hillsborough County Public Schools

Hillsborough County Public Schools partnered with Lenovo and Connection to accelerate its digital transformation and improve the student experience, keeping education on track during the pandemic and beyond.



Lenovo

Connection
we solve IT

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Who is Hillsborough County Public Schools?

With more than 220,000 students, Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) in west-central Florida is the seventh-largest public school system in the United States. The organization manages more than 270 school sites across the region—from pre-kindergarten through to high school—employing some 25,000 people.

The HCPS motto is “Preparing Students for Life”, and the organization is committed to providing a quality education that enables each student to excel as a successful, responsible citizen.



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The Challenge

Led by Chief Technology Officer Dr. Thomas Weeks, HCPS is a leading advocate of the power of technology in the classroom. The school system is at the forefront of digital initiatives spanning everything from remote connectivity to audiovisual programs.

“For the benefit of all our students, we’re always looking for ways to augment the classroom environment, enhance the curriculum and make sure that our teachers have the opportunity to use technology in exciting, innovative ways,” confirms Dr. Thomas Weeks.

For HCPS, the coronavirus pandemic accelerated its digital transformation roadmap. With schools ordered to close to combat the spread of the virus, the organization aimed to pivot rapidly to remote learning. It was vital to put laptops in the hands of every student and teacher in the district—fast.

“At the start of the pandemic, we simply did not have enough laptops to go around,” says Dr. Thomas Weeks. “To bridge the gap, we implemented a virtual desktop infrastructure [VDI], enabling students and teachers to use older laptops and desktops while we set about purchasing new technology that would deliver a first-class user experience.”



“The pandemic revealed the importance of remote working in education. We want to empower our students and teachers to access the resources they need from any location.”

Dr. Thomas Weeks

CTO, Hillsborough County Public Schools

Taking rapid action

With help from emergency financial aid grants made by the U.S. Federal Government, including the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) and Emergency Connectivity Funds (ECF), HCPS has modernized, standardized, and expanded its laptop fleet.

HCPS engaged Lenovo and Connection to procure, stage, bundle, and deploy more than 100,000 Lenovo 300 Series and 500 Series Windows notebooks, which come equipped with free LanSchool classroom management software for the first year within a 12-month period—despite the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Microsoft Windows operating system provides a responsive user experience for students and staff.

Hardware

Lenovo 300 Series and 500 Series Windows notebooks
Lenovo Legion gaming systems
Lenovo ThinkPad P Series mobile workstations
Lenovo ThinkStation desktop workstations
JAR Systems Elevate USB-C charging carts

Software

LanSchool
Microsoft Windows

Services

Lenovo Warranty Upgrades

Together, HCPS, Lenovo, and Connection worked closely to optimize supply chain, leverage funding opportunities, and deliver ongoing device support for both students and staff. One of the key success factors of the deployment was a solid logistical plan. Connection ensured the devices shipped in full truckloads—streamlining the process and helping HCPS get the devices out to students and teachers as quickly as possible.

“The Connection team worked with district staff to come up with a solution to track the assets as we ordered them, so that we had a digital copy of where those assets were going,” explains Dr. Thomas Weeks. “Connection places a physical asset tag on the device. Then, they provide us with the documentation showing where the asset belongs. Connection also helped ensure each device was pre-loaded with software and ready to use, which really saved us critical deployment time.

“We couldn’t have dealt with this type of volume without a partner like Connection being intimately involved in the process. Those efforts were, and they continue to be, critical to our overall modernization and standardization efforts in the classroom.”



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“At Lenovo and Connection, we have the end-user top of mind. And, in education, the end-user is the student and teacher, both of whom now have the modern technology needed to maximize the educational experience and inspire the future of learning.”

Christian Rivera Blas

K-12 Business Executive, South Florida, Lenovo

Taking the next step

As students and teachers have returned to the classroom, HCPS is deepening its collaboration with Lenovo and Connection by relying on their partnerships with other technology providers such as JAR Systems, a Tampa Bay-based manufacturer of classroom charging technology. A good example being the deployment of nearly 2,000 JAR Systems Elevate USB-C Charging Carts across the district. The carts from JAR Systems are specifically designed for Lenovo devices commonly used by classroom students, enabling rapid charging via USB-C Power Delivery technology. The carts are AC adapter-free, meaning that students and teachers in the classroom will have access to charged devices without having to worry about the AC adapters coming undone, creating a mess, or cart downtime. What's more, HCPS will continue to save through reduced maintenance and replacement AC adapter costs.

HCPS has also deployed high-performance Lenovo ThinkStation desktop workstations to support middle and high school design, technology, and engineering classes in Career and Technical Education (CTE), Lenovo ThinkPad P Series mobile workstations for field staff, as well as Lenovo Legion gaming systems for its esports program.

JAR SYSTEMS



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Results

By the end of the 2023 school year, Lenovo and Connection will have supported HCPS with 125,000 endpoint devices in a no-touch environment through Connection's Technology Integration and Distribution Center. Ultimately, HCPS's goal is to equip each student with their own device for use in the classroom and at home.

Dr. Thomas Weeks comments: "We're now approaching the magic number of one device per student, which will create new possibilities for our teachers to use technology to support the curriculum and enhance learning."

- ✓ Supports strategy of one device per student
- ✓ Enabled remote learning during the pandemic and beyond
- ✓ >100,000 devices delivered
- ✓ 270+ schools received Lenovo solutions

Always looking for ways to deliver a better experience for students and teachers, Dr. Thomas Weeks and his team are working with Lenovo and Connection to kit out classrooms with the latest audiovisual tech, too.

Dr. Thomas Weeks elaborates: “We are adding audio enhancements—including microphones, speakers, and audio amplification—to ensure that students can hear no matter where they’re positioned within the classroom. We’re also adding interactive displays to all our core classrooms, helping to ensure that all students can see clearly when teachers are presenting. As teachers become more familiar with the technology, I think they’ll use it in even more creative and exciting ways.”



“From a technology perspective, we’ve been through a massive transformation to ensure that our teachers can deliver classes remotely and that students have the optimal environment for learning.”

Dr. Thomas Weeks

CTO, Hillsborough County Public Schools

Why **Lenovo** and Connection?

By partnering with Lenovo and Connection, HCPS has taken huge strides on its digital transformation journey.

Dr. Thomas Weeks confirms: “Working with the Connection and Lenovo teams, we determined laptop specifications that would deliver a high-quality remote-learning experience—without breaking our budget. What started out as a one-time infrastructure purchase has since evolved in ways we never imagined. Lenovo and Connection have both been wonderful partners for the district.”

He concludes: “For HCPS, I want to make sure that a partner brings value by taking time to really understand what we need—even if the solution turns out to be something the vendor can’t sell us directly. We know that Connection and Lenovo are looking out for our overall success, and that’s truly what makes them a valuable partner.”



A photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, a young boy with short black hair, wearing a grey t-shirt with green and yellow stripes, is smiling and raising his right hand. Behind him, a young girl with long black hair, wearing a blue dress, is also raising her hand. To the left, a woman, presumably the teacher, is partially visible, looking towards the students. The background shows a classroom setting with desks and windows.

Connection Experience

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Dr. Thomas Weeks

CTO, Hillsborough County Public Schools

Connection[®]
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How can you support students in the classroom and at home?

Delivering a better experience for students and teachers, supported by Lenovo technology.

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