

Delivering student-centered learning, remotely

Great Oaks Career Campuses ensures quality education by partnering with Dell Technologies IT and Professional Learning Services.



Customer profile



K-12 Education | United States



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Stephen Jacobs

Director of IT, Great Oaks Career Campuses

Organization needs

When local mandates suspended in-person learning, Great Oaks Career Campuses had to reimagine education. As it moved to blended and virtual learning, the district needed to balance critical hands-on experience and student safety while providing the support that teachers and staff required in a rapidly changing educational environment.

Organization results

- Deliver equitable learning access for all students.
- Accelerate the move to digital curriculum from three years to days.
- Provide learning continuity despite unprecedented times.
- Offer individualized technology.
- Support teachers and staff while moving to a blended learning environment.
- Improve the ability to meet challenges and innovate.

Solutions at a glance

- [Professional Learning Services](#)
- [K-12 Education Strategists](#)
- [Dell Latitude 9410 2-in-1 laptops](#)
- [Chromebook 3100](#)
- [U2721DE Monitor](#)
- [Dell Active Pen for Dell Latitude 9410 2-in-1 laptops](#)

Teaching students how to overcome obstacles is the unofficial mission of Great Oaks Career Campuses. That mission was put to the test when local mandates required the transition to remote learning. Serving 45,000 7th — 12th graders and adults across 40 campus and satellite locations, Great Oaks is one of the largest career and technical education (CTE) districts in the United States, and the switch to remote learning posed a major challenge. To complicate matters further, in-person hands-on instruction and fieldwork, which serve as the backbone for how CTE programs prepare students for success in future careers, were no longer permitted.

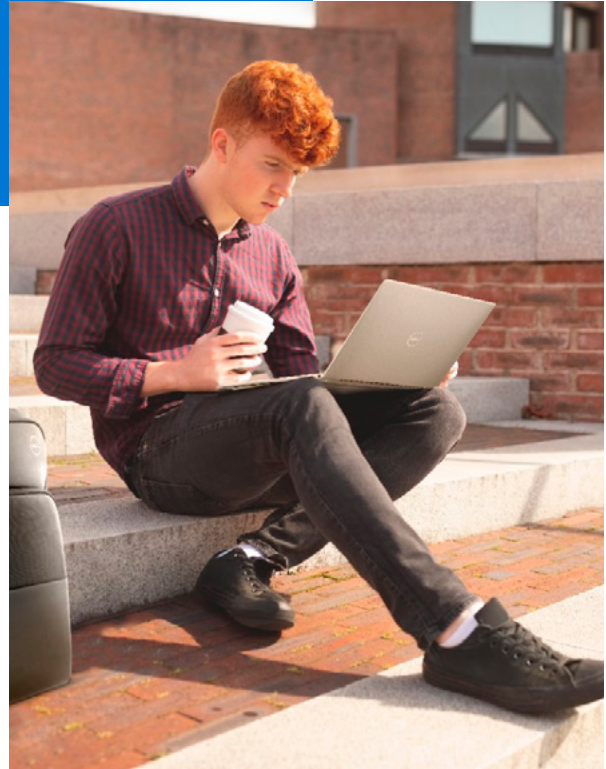
At a moment's notice, the district had to pivot to virtual learning while still safely providing students with essential hands-on experience. Great Oaks had a strong IT strategy, but its existing technology fell short of enabling remote instruction and couldn't support real-world training. "We needed to figure out how to keep hands-on experiences at the forefront of learning; otherwise, there would be an employment gap," explains Joel King, director of teaching and learning at Great Oaks Career Campuses.

To quickly find the right solutions without sacrificing students' education quality, Great Oaks turned to Dell Technologies.

Hands-on experience with digitally based instruction

The district had been working toward a blended learning model and was testing virtual desktop for higher-end applications, including trying out NVIDIA graphic processing units that support hypervisor. However, with the sudden shift to fully remote learning, students and teachers needed new access solutions immediately.

Great Oaks accelerated its move to a fully digital online curriculum. It replaced lab computers with virtual desktops that work remotely with students' various devices and facilitate more equitable access for all.



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Joel King

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CTE students and teachers are extraordinarily diverse in their demographics and needs, so quality learning required more than a one-size-fits-all IT approach. “We offer individualized learning and wanted individualized technology. We managed to offer that quickly and at a difficult time with Dell Technologies,” says Stephen Jacobs, director of IT at Great Oaks Career Campuses.

Quality experiential learning that’s safe for students

When evaluating technology options, Great Oaks’ IT department takes into account each department’s specific needs. “We think about how technology will support learning and make it easier for teachers to do their jobs,” Jacobs explains.

In a remote learning environment, that starts by strengthening communication with the appropriate videoconferencing technology. Videoconferencing without the right tools can be a frustrating experience for everyone involved. Jacobs says, “Providing quality instruction requires a great microphone, screen and camera, and we have that with Dell Latitude 9410 2-in-1 laptops,”

For Great Oaks, communication and instruction involve providing visual examples and demonstrations, which was initially complicated with remote learning, but the challenge was solved with the right technology solutions. King shares, “Teachers can easily draw an example or write an equation on the screen with their Dell Latitude 9410 2-in-1 laptops equipped with Dell Active Pens, which helps students feel like they are still in class. It’s also easier for students to complete various independent tasks and engage with a tablet.”

To optimize the workspace, teachers each received a U2721DE monitor. With a larger screen size and twice the pixel space than the teachers’ previous solution, this 27-inch monitor allows more and clearer details to be seen on the screen, but eye comfort was an added benefit. “We’re tethered to screens for six hours a day,” Jacobs explains. “ComfortView reduces eye strain and helps us feel less tired.” Teachers were also able to reduce desktop clutter because the monitor only requires a USB-C cable to connect with a laptop.

Most importantly, Great Oaks can now continue keeping with its mission and help students gain real-world training. King states, “We figured out how to keep hands-on experience at the forefront of learning with Dell Technologies solutions.”

Jacobs elaborates, “We’ve gotten innovative with remote learning by allowing students to really demonstrate their knowledge with Chromebooks, which we selected for students because they are highly durable, have a long battery life and provide great cameras.” Using front and rear-facing cameras, students can show what they have learned. For example, those taking automotive classes can demonstrate tire changes, and students in biology can grow a plant and show it maturing throughout its life cycle. “Now, teachers can provide a quality assessment with the excellent cameras on Chromebooks,” Jacobs shares.



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Gaining critical support to help teachers and staff quickly pivot

While teachers and staff required the right technological tools to quickly shift their entire curriculum online and provide virtual instruction, they also had to build the skills and practices needed to adapt teaching models and enable remote and blended learning. For advice and guidance on successfully making this critical transition, Great Oaks turned to Dell Technologies Professional Learning Services. “Our teachers adjusted their teaching models, and we gained peace of mind and guidance from Dell Technologies Professional Learning Services,” says King.

Great Oaks teachers and staff also partnered with the Dell Education Strategy team, which allows them to keep an eye toward the future. “We are better able to support our teachers and be more strategic by working with the Dell Education Strategy team,” King shares.

Providing an education that prepares students for tomorrow

Priding itself on preparing students for the future of work, Great Oaks continuously evaluates how CTE courses should be delivered. And despite a global shift in education and the uncertainty of what comes next, the organization is confident in its future, especially with the help of technology. Jacobs explains, “We’ve proven that we can quickly adapt and change. Now, we have the foundation and flexibility to go a lot of different directions with Dell Technologies.”