GUIDING YOUR DISTRICT TO MORE EFFECTIVE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The influx of new mobile devices and related products are making successful asset management strategies even more critical to districts looking to reduce losses and earn significant savings.
Schools and districts are investing in hundreds and thousands of electronic devices to meet the demands of an increasingly digital curriculum. But it’s not just the devices themselves that need to be tracked. Other factors such as software licenses, purchase and repair history, warranties and service plans, physical locations, and the person or department responsible for the device are all important pieces of information that need to be part of the asset record.

The bottom line is that, more than ever, districts need a comprehensive system to keep track of their investment in school- and district-owned devices. Schools with these systems are reporting significant savings. One district reports that asset losses have dropped 75%. As a result of success like this, more schools are evaluating asset management systems and those that have them are broadening their scope to include an increasing variety of fixed, digital, and instructional resources.

Many K-12 districts have traditionally managed their assets and textbooks with spreadsheets and software programs that were designed for businesses, not schools. Although it is the influx of electronic devices that has escalated the need for accountability in resource management, districts actually need to manage multiple categories of assets...
such as textbooks, library media, science lab equipment, band uniforms, musical instruments, furniture, office equipment, technology, physical plant equipment, and even buses. When added together, the value of district-owned resources in the hands of students can be considerable.

Once a system is implemented, the annual savings can be significant. Districts average a 3-5% loss each year in textbooks alone. It is not uncommon for districts to lose up to 18-25% of their assets over a three-year period. It is easy to understand that without an integrated system, a district could lose track of a lot of small items, but large items also disappear such as interactive whiteboards and musical instruments such as tubas and pianos.

To increase their organizational efficiency and to support student achievement by getting the right assets into the right hands at the right time, districts need a universal system to manage all their assets.

WHAT’S DRIVING THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY?
There is an increasing need for district accountability in managing all assets. District budgets are tighter than they have ever been, and there is demand for accountability and transparency as to how public funds are spent. The 2012 Metlife Survey of the American Teacher, Challenges for School Leadership, reported that 78% of principals and 86% of teachers note the difficulty of managing the budget and resources to meet their school’s needs. It is an ongoing challenge to respond to school needs with budgets that do not stretch far enough.

Administrators need to demonstrate good stewardship of their scarce resources by effectively managing supply and demand. A comprehensive asset management program provides administrators with the data they need to ensure accountability, and to make accurate budgeting and purchasing decisions based on asset utilization, condition, and demand. This means: 1) buy what is needed, 2) better utilize current resources, and 3) repurpose or sell what remains – all in the goal of supporting learning outcomes with appropriate resources when and where they are needed throughout the district.

WHY DO YOU NEED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT?

- Centralize information and reduce costs.
- Support instructional goals with efficient resource deployment.
- Respond to district and state audits.
- Limit waste, loss, fraud and abuse of district resources.
- Create transparency for spending of public funds.
- Reduce redundancy.
- Reallocate savings to other district needs.

It is not just about the technology, although the print to digital shift is a significant driver for change and often the triggering event for districts to look for new asset management options. Demand for accountability comes from both within and outside the district. Managing local, state, and federal funds prudently while also responding to the needs of the district can sometimes be a juggling act for administrators. And it needs to be a transparent process. Audits require that districts quickly and accurately locate all assets; track funding sources such as Title I; and make both students and staff accountable for the assets under their control.

There is a general sense of increased risk when an asset is assigned to the student: textbook, instrument, uniform, or mobile device. However, most districts have experienced losses from both students and district employees. Administrators are actively searching for a more effective way to manage and ensure accountability for resources throughout the district – no matter whom they are assigned to.

THE BENEFITS OF EFFICIENT ASSET TRACKING FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS
For most districts it has been a cumbersome and time-consuming process to manually track all their assets. A universal system provides comprehensive asset management that:

- Reduces financial losses by assigning assets to specific individuals, locations or departments.
- Identifies and circulates each and every individual item, 24/7.
- Responds to funding audits by knowing
Guiding Your District to More Effective Resource Management

An efficient asset management system provides districts a higher level of confidence in asset inventories while showing a clear accountability trail to individual students and staff. The return on investment in a system can be significant. Not only does effective asset management decrease district losses, but financial savings also occur from greater efficiency in managing assets. More effective forecasting and budgeting saves both money and staff time. Good asset management allows districts to spend money in other areas – perhaps purchasing more resources that directly impact learning outcomes.

WHAT SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS NEED TO KNOW

The asset management programs available to businesses do not meet the unique needs of schools and districts. For example, K-12 education has its own terminology, and business software does not support that or communicate with K-12 systems such as a district’s student information system (SIS) or library circulation system. Business systems are not designed to support the individual needs of students and are inadequate in supporting 1:1 device initiatives or specific district reporting requirements. Consequently, business software is not a good match for the accounting and resource management of schools and districts.

Districts are putting significant assets into the hands of students – particularly middle and high school students. These students often have a list of district assets assigned for their use and care: textbooks; technology devices; STEM equipment such as calculators, cameras, or lab equipment; musical instruments; band uniforms; and sports equipment. Thousands of dollars of district assets can be in the hands of an individual student. With that level of potential liability, keeping students accountable for all the assets assigned to them is a basic principle of effective asset management.

Centralizing information is a critical factor in effective and efficient asset management. The ability to import information from any other system such as the purchase order accounting system or SIS (student information system) maximizes the system’s efficiency by putting all information into a central database. A complete audit trail of changes related to every asset can be housed in the central database as well as a help desk ticketing service that requests help or repair for each asset.

THE ADVANTAGES OF A CENTRALIZED COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Managed from a single district location, centralized control yields maximum efficiency and savings. A simple, browser-based system is the easiest for the district to manage efficiently. A web-based system eliminates problems that districts have experienced with client software and hosted solutions at multiple locations. Centralizing asset information also reduces administrative staff time throughout the district.

Each asset can be tracked to the school building, classroom, and student or teacher responsible for it. Browser-based software provides complete management of assets with minimal tech requirements. The software minimizes system complexities, staffing, and maintenance, ultimately saving money.

“We can prove that we’ve cut waste and inefficiency, and we can allocate the money saved to other areas of need in the district.”

--Diana Freeman, Executive Director of Media and Instructional Technology, Johnston County School District, North Carolina
HOW ASSET MANAGEMENT SAVES DISTRICTS MONEY

Effective asset management allows districts to maximize usage and defer unnecessary spending. Districts can opt to save that money or deploy it toward other categories. Even if a district averages only a 3% loss across all assets each year, Destiny Resource Manager can yield significant savings.

During a pilot program in a large district, staff found $5,000 worth of band instruments the district did not know it had while tagging assets to enter into Destiny. The district can now delay the purchase of new instruments and transfer their current inventory of instruments more efficiently throughout the district.

Administrators in Johnston County Schools in North Carolina state, “We can prove that we’ve cut waste and inefficiency, and we can allocate the money saved to other areas of the district.”

In addition to direct savings from not overbuying with Destiny Resource Manager, districts achieve real savings in staff expense by using a centralized, comprehensive system.

While it is true that the larger the district, the larger the savings, every school district needs to exert fiscal management to stretch their budget dollars.

DESTINY® RESOURCE MANAGER™ - A SOLUTION TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE RESOURCES

Destiny Resource Manager is a part of an integrated software platform that also includes textbook, library materials, and media management systems. Destiny Resource Manager supports student achievement by getting assets into student hands at the point of learning. Specially designed for the needs of PreK-12 school districts, Destiny Resource Manager maximizes resource management and improves financial accountability while decreasing losses from misplaced or broken equipment. It is customizable and flexible. The software does not dictate process but adapts to district process. Access is permissions-based so staff and faculty can only see and change the information for assets they are directly responsible for.

The Destiny partnership with Absolute® Software (Absolute® Manage & Mobile Device Management) incorporates a device management system into the suite of asset
management tools. Districts can efficiently track, manage, and secure all computers and mobile devices, regardless of their operating systems—complementing the Destiny platform—resulting in a complete, end-to-end resource management system. This solution allows districts to manage the process with Destiny and manage the devices with Absolute.

**STORIES FROM THE FIELD**

Mark Choi, an instructional application analyst in the Bellevue School District in Bellevue, Washington talks about the improved accountability they now have in their district with Destiny. "Accounting now has a higher level of confidence in the inventory of assets. Before our system was cumbersome, time consuming, and not necessarily accurate."

The district had previously used a FileMaker Pro database to manage assets. Choi recalls, “the district wanted more accountability for electronic devices.” Bellevue is now in its fourth year using Destiny. They are currently piloting a 1:1 initiative. Destiny will help them check devices in and out to the students. They plan to roll out the 1:1 initiative in all middle and high schools over the next two years.

Having experienced “good” audits with the technology devices, the district would like to bring more departments online into Destiny—anything that was paid for by district funds such as instruments, band uniforms, even transport.

In Mooresville, North Carolina, Scott Smith, chief technology officer, uses Destiny to manage the 6,000 devices in their 1:1 district. The barcodes allow easy scanning so they know where the devices are at all times. Smith reports, "Destiny is vitally important to us to keep up with where the device is and who it belongs to and who it belongs to. Knowing where the device is allows us to be fiscally responsible."

Mooresville is in its 6th year of 1:1 and their second year using Destiny. Smith stated that they originally had no good way to track the devices. But “since we’ve been using the resource management system for the last two years, it’s been a breeze.”

Meanwhile, in the fastest growing school district in North Carolina—Johnston County—administrators wanted to allocate technology funds fairly across the district by reducing loss and increasing accountability. Destiny allows the district to do exactly that while maximizing the value of their fixed assets. The result? The district reduced their asset losses by up to 75% and eliminated redundant technology purchases.

The district had attempted to merge 42 different inventory databases (one for each school in
Johnston County). Their need for a new system became urgent when the data became non-viable and assets were being lost. In addition the state began requiring purchase tracking and an annual inventory of assets. Simultaneously, the district was attempting to change the mindset that classroom tools belonged to the teacher when, in fact, they actually belonged to the school and district.

With Destiny, Johnston County now tracks all of its asset purchases maximizing its investments and minimizing its losses.

In Vancouver School District in Washington, administrators are using the Destiny platform to manage their library, textbooks, and technology assets. Mark Ray, director of instructional technology and library resources, reports that Destiny “helps us keep track of lots of moving pieces. With tight budgets and accountability, it’s important to be able to track assets well.”

And as important as accountability and savings are to a district, the greater impact of efficient asset management is that it supports the district’s instructional goals. Getting the right tools to the right place at the right time so that learning can be supported and not disrupted is a key metric of success. Teachers rely on access to the district’s assets for instruction; so efficient asset management is both an instructional management tool and a fiscal management tool.

CONCLUSION
The benefits of a district-wide, comprehensive asset management program are clear. Even though it is often the influx of mobile devices onto K-12 campuses that is the triggering event for districts to improve accountability and management of fixed, digital, and instructional resources, the return on the investment can be significant.

Oversight of the spending of public education funds and the drive to increase accountability for both students and educators are critical reasons for districts to invest in improved asset management. Knowing the location and status of each asset and who is responsible for them is critical to timely response to audit requests of education spending and effective management of district resources.

Savings in out-of-pocket costs that can be redirected to other district priorities are mirrored by the decrease in staff time required to manage a centralized, browser-based program.

Maximum effectiveness and efficiency can be achieved through use of the Destiny platform. Districts reap the benefits of an integrated, universal system that allows them to image, patch, configure, and control all active computers and devices, regardless of their operating system from a single console. At the same time, Destiny facilitates management of all district assets including library resources, media, textbooks, instruments, and classroom technology in an end-to-end solution.

ABOUT FOLLETT’S PREK-12 BUSINESS | FOLLETTLEARNING.COM
Follett is the largest provider of educational materials and technology solutions to PreK-12 libraries, classrooms, learning centers and school districts in the United States, and a major supplier to educational institutions worldwide. Follett distributes books, reference materials, digital resources, ebooks and audiovisual materials, as well as pre-owned textbooks. Follett also is one of the leading providers of integrated educational technology for the management of physical and digital assets, the tracking, storing and analyzing of academic data, and digital learning environment tools for the classroom focusing on student achievement.

ABOUT NEWBAY MEDIA
This white paper was produced by Tech & Learning’s marketing services arm, NewBay Plus. Tech & Learning is the premier publication and leading resource for education technology professionals responsible for implementing and purchasing technology products in K-12 districts and schools. NewBay Plus provides content marketing and other services in NewBay Media's five markets: Education, Music, AV/Pro Audio, Video and Broadcasting, and Consumer Electronics. For more information, contact Joe Braue at jbraue.nbmedia.com