

Case Study

education

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Lehigh Valley Academy Regional Charter School

Lehigh Valley Academy learns that interactive classroom technology can be engaging and affordable with Ricoh Ultra Short Throw Projectors



"Ricoh's short throw projectors enabled us to incorporate interactive technology into our classrooms at an affordable price. Equipping every classroom with smart boards would have cost \$500,000—these projectors were a quarter of the cost."

— Susan Mauser
Chief Executive Officer
Lehigh Valley Academy
Regional Charter School
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania



ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Every day, teachers in K-12 classrooms look for ways to hold their students' attention and impart information that will prepare them for the future. That's not always an easy task, considering today's students are practically born with a tablet or smartphone in hand. The imagery they see every day is ultra-clear, crisp and vivid and the information they digest is available with a simple tap, click or swipe.

Lehigh Valley Academy Regional Charter School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, understood this dilemma. Ranking among the top two dozen schools in the state, they were continually striving to create learning environments that reflect the experience of everyday life for students—while making teachers more productive and engaging. Yet, doing so while serving approximately 1,640 students in 70-plus classrooms had its challenges.

Budgets were limited. Technology was typically dedicated to specific classroom space. And anything new needed to come with an affordable price and a quick learning curve.

CHALLENGE

The school campus is comprised of three buildings, one to house grades K-3, one for grades 4-6, and another for grades 7-12. Throughout its dozens of classrooms there were only a few stationary, ceiling-mounted projectors to make information interactive for students. In recent years, they had invested in smart boards to give teachers and students more mobility and make lessons more engaging.

CHALLENGE

- Integrating interactive technology into classrooms
- Making classroom instruction more engaging
- Limited technology budget

SOLUTION

- RICOH PJ WX4152 Ultra Short Throw Projectors
- Year-long trial to determine teacher reaction
- Projectors as integral part of classroom experience

RESULTS

- Projectors that enable interactive classroom learning
- Projectors replacing end-of-life smart boards
- Satisfied teachers, engaged students
- Affordable, interactive alternative to smart boards

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SOLUTION

We had just the right solution—a Ricoh Ultra Short Throw Projector. We demonstrated its capabilities to the charter school's Director of Facilities and Operations, Holly Parkinson, who compared our technology to other short throw projectors on the market.

"We made a commitment to having technology in the classroom," said Susan Mauser, CEO at Lehigh Valley Academy Regional Charter School. "The first way we did that was through smart boards."

Teachers loved the smart board technology. But, equipping each teacher with the technology going forward was cost prohibitive.

"We were buying about 10 smart boards a year, which each cost between \$8,000 to \$9,000 with installation and software," said Mauser. "We wanted to find an alternative that was more cost effective."

Ricoh had been providing production printing technology for their copy center and had a solid reputation with the charter school. After discovering their need for more cost-effective interactive technology, we started thinking beyond printers to ways we could introduce a more affordable, flexible and user-friendly solution to enhance the classroom experience.

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One key to that decision was being able to leverage their existing smart board software. With Ricoh's projector, they could use their smart board software license to ensure they had the same capabilities no matter how the classroom was equipped for interactive technology.

"Plus, we really liked the features of Ricoh's ultra-short throw projector," said Parkinson.

Our ultra-short throw projector connects to a teacher's desktop or mobile device to display classroom materials. It can play multimedia such as videos and movies and present crisp, compelling color-rich images even in most sunlit classrooms. The ultra-short throw feature of the projector allows teachers to project images inches from the projected surface without compromising quality.

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They can also be housed on carts to be moved to any position in a classroom, from classroom to classroom—or remain stationary. For now, they decided it was best to keep their projectors on stands in dedicated classrooms.

“We don’t move them from classroom to classroom now, but we like that feature,” said Parkinson. “Mobility isn’t as important day to day as it is year to year as our needs change.”

Today, their smart boards and ultra-short throw projectors are an integral part of the classroom experience. Teachers are using their interactive technology for everything from presenting classroom lessons to taking attendance.

“Ricoh’s ultra-short throw projectors enabled us to incorporate interactive technology into our classrooms at an affordable price,” said Mauser. “Equipping every classroom with smart boards would have cost \$500,000—these projectors were a quarter of the cost.”

RESULTS

After the first year comparing our ultra-short throw projector to a competitor’s product, they purchased eight Ricoh projectors. A year later, they added 11 more projectors and then an additional 10 for new classrooms. All totaled, the charter school has 29 Ricoh projectors and 40 smart boards. As their smart boards reach end of life, they will replace them with more affordable Ricoh projectors.

“Almost every one of our classrooms has interactive technology and our teachers really appreciate having these tools,” said Mauser.

Technology as learning assistant

Since day one, the charter school has infused technology into the learning experience. Now operating 15 years, they consider technology to be a vital tool in the process of educating students and preparing them for the future.

“As technology has improved and become more affordable, it plays a larger and larger role,” said Mauser. “We’re almost one-to-one with technology. All students have access to Chromebooks, tablets and desktops, as well as access to smart boards and projectors in the classroom.”

Teacher retention tool, student engagement booster

While teacher recruitment efforts don’t hinge on technology, they certainly appreciate having innovative equipment to perform their jobs more efficiently and engage their students. And that can go a long way toward retaining satisfied teachers.

“We hear from the teachers that they appreciate having the technology,” said Mauser. Before we had the smart boards and ultra-short throw projectors, we had six classes at a grade level and some had technology and some didn’t. Now, everyone has interactive technology.”

“Ricoh projectors are a very affordable way to bring interactive technology into the classroom. I don’t see us ever going back to permanent smart boards on the wall.”

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Hands-on experience, affordable solution

For other schools considering ultra-short throw projectors, the key is trying out the various solutions available, said Parkinson. Sales presentations tell part of the story, while hands-on experience is needed to make an informed decision, she said.

“It wasn’t until we got the projectors into the hands of the teachers that we realized how valuable they could be to them and their students,” said Parkinson.

As for cost, the charter school is very satisfied. They have been using the Ricoh projectors for three years—adding more projectors along the way—and the cost has remained level.

“Ricoh projectors are a very affordable way to bring interactive technology into the classroom. I don’t see us ever going back to permanent smart boards on the wall,” said Mauser.



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