

### SUMMARY

Lexmark designed a unique testing application to print bubble-sheet standardized tests, eliminating costly and cumbersome, pre-printed and distributed test forms. The solution for the 81,000-student district allows teachers to print student-personalized tests and see results on demand. The Lexmark solution, designed and implemented in just one month, reduces costs, simplifies the testing process and gives teachers immediate access to scores.

## Lexmark designs, delivers customized testing solution for Austin Independent School District in one month

### The Organization

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) is the fourth largest in Texas. With more than 11,000 professional and support personnel serving nearly 81,000 students, AISD operates 107 campuses with an annual operating budget that exceeds \$761 million. Ranking fifth on the 2000 U.S. Census report of the fastest-growing cities in the United States, Austin, Texas will build eight new schools, a performing arts center and add 100 classrooms to existing schools in the next four years.

### The Challenge

Administering 57 different standardized tests to nearly 81,000 students three times a year is no small undertaking. In previous years, AISD had a centralized benchmark process.

More than a quarter-million commercially printed test forms were being pre-filled at the district's administration building. Each form was personalized with students' names, printed and then distributed to 107 different campus locations. This limiting and costly approach was prone to delays.

Teachers had to request their tests more than two weeks in advance so they could be printed and delivered to the school on time. With new students entering the school system and others moving from one school to another, these forms, known as bubble sheets, were sometimes sent to the wrong school, leading to further delays.

After testing was complete, all 300,000 bubble sheets – equivalent to 600 reams of paper – were gathered and transported back to the administration building. Once checked and accounted for, the forms were fed into an optical scanner and processed. This single processing point created a bottleneck, delaying the availability of students' grades. The entire cycle is repeated three times during the school year, adding up to nearly one million bubble sheets.

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—Melody Parrish  
Director of Management Information Systems  
Austin Independent School District  
Austin, Texas  
[www.austinisd.org](http://www.austinisd.org)

“Printing centrally, distributing, collecting, and then scanning centrally takes enormous coordination and time,” said Melody Parrish, AISD’s Director of Management Information Systems. “With students changing campuses and class schedules and new students registering, we have a 30-percent mobility factor. We needed to find a better way to make the process easier for our teachers and give them the ability to view the test results easily and quickly.”



### The Solution

In an effort to make it easier on teachers and to eliminate costly and time-consuming courier costs, AISD decided to decentralize this process and move the printing and processing of the tests out to the schools. AISD wanted to find a solution quickly so that it could administer its middle of year testing with the new solution.

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Lexmark education-industry specialists made a formal presentation and demonstration of the solution to Parrish and Gray Salada, the district's Chief Information Officer.

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"The speed of response from the Lexmark team and their level of public-school expertise was impressive," said Parrish. "When we explained that we had a 10-day alternating class schedule, the Lexmark team already knew what that meant in our industry. That's a significant benefit because we didn't have time to waste getting them up to speed on key requirements like that. They inherently understand the linkage between campus, student and teacher."

Leveraging the power of the Lexmark Document Solutions Suite, application consultants from Lexmark developed bubble-sheet templates specifically for AISD, including design and content elements such as the school logo. The software's flexibility allowed the precise positioning of the form's text and dozens of bubbles, critical to assuring complete compatibility with AISD's software, including Principia Products' Remark OMR®, Pearson School Systems' SASI™ student information system, and an Oracle® database. The software automatically pre-populated the tests with variable information from SASI such as the student's name, ID number, class name and teacher's name.

Now, teachers electronically log into a password-protected site within the Lexmark application and select the specific test they want to print and the specific group of students being tested. The bubble sheets are then emailed to the teacher in PDF format and the teacher prints them on plain paper at their campus location. Next, the tests are administered and the completed forms are scanned into an Oracle database at the specific school.

Next, the Principia software reads the bubbles and stores the answers in a CSV file that aggregates the answers and scores the tests. Now, teachers can view the test results by class, by student and even down to the question level and use this information to plan the curriculum for the next semester.

"We were very impressed with how quickly the Lexmark team was able to integrate this solution into our existing systems," said Salada. "This was a critical part of the solution and Lexmark did it in just a few days."

Simultaneously, Lexmark account specialists fanned out to train 20 AISD staffers, who then trained more than 100 of the district's teachers and other administrators.

### The Results

Exactly one month after AISD decided to employ Lexmark, the system went into production for the middle of year assessments.

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From their computers, teachers now request and print bubble sheets on demand. Costly pre-printed forms are no longer needed. Delay-prone distribution from a central site, and subsequent collection and scanning have been eliminated. And, best of all, teachers can view test results immediately, which helps them serve students better.

Designed with ease of use in mind for the district's teachers, usage issues were nearly non-existent. "We had almost no support calls

when the solution was rolled-out,” Parrish said. “I attribute that to fact that the Lexmark team listened to our requirements very carefully and trained our staff in a way that made everything run like clockwork.”

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“The value of this solution for our teachers and students is tremendous,” said AISD Superintendent Pascal D. Forgione. “It gives teachers more time with students and immediate access to scores to help them adjust their approach to the specific needs of their class. It will not only save our district precious budget dollars but also help our teachers have an even greater impact on the success of the students.”

Designing and implementing an industry-specific solution for 107 separate locations in just one month is rare. More than simply a test on which Lexmark scored high, the Austin ISD solution is a statement about Lexmark’s willingness to partner with customers and deliver solutions that solve unique customer challenges.

When it comes to fast response, industry know-how and a solution that really makes a difference, Lexmark gets an A+.