

Wisconsin high school students become certified to repair Chromebooks, saving their district time and money

Acer Repair Certification eLearning Program provides Chippewa Falls students with valuable skills and experience

Crumbs in the keyboard. Broken LCD screens. Dead batteries. Even these routine issues would take Chromebooks out of service for months when the Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District in Wisconsin contracted with an outside repair company to provide support. Today, however, students at Chippewa Falls Senior High School handle 95% of the district's repairs, which now rarely take longer than 48 hours, according to Amy Ambelang, library media specialist and information technology instructor at the high school.

The students are trained through the Acer Repair Certification eLearning Program, an 8-week self-paced course that covers Chromebook components, post-repair quality assurance and hardware reconfiguration for the 5,000 Acer devices deployed in the district. Students learn through videos, instructional materials, assessments, and required tasks. Much of the instruction is gamified with points, badges and leaderboards.

"I love the modules because each year we have different computer models," Ambelang says. "Acer's courses are always up to date, and the content is high quality."

Real-world experience

Students complete the free program as part of the Chromebook Repair 1 course Ambelang teaches. After completing the coursework and becoming certified, students then provide quality control for the Chromebook Repair 2 students who fix district devices.

"I have the newly certified students

check repairs so they get practice running updates, making sure everything works and things look presentable," she says. "It's good reinforcement, and they understand that this certification is an industry credential. It adds a layer of credibility to what they're doing because they have to finish the modules in order to continue."

Chippewa Falls went one-to-one during the 2013-2014 school year, and use exclusively Acer Chromebooks. Outsourcing repairs to an IT support company was expensive, and could take three months for routine fixes. Instead, the district's IT staff members began fixing Chromebooks in-house, but there were still drawbacks.

'Flawless' program

"The problem was that I had to make instructional videos myself showing how to do different repairs—or I had to find a video online, but what's out there is wildly inconsistent," she recalls. "Acer's course solves those issues."

"None of the other brands had a program that was free, updated regularly and so easily accessible," Ambelang says. "And Acer has been really easy to work with; there haven't been any problems. The program is pretty flawless."

About 20 to 50 Chromebooks come in each week for service, Ambelang says. "Half are five-minute repairs, but even the more complicated ones are typically finished within 48 hours."



Giving students options

About 50 to 70 students get Acer-certified each year, and many of them move on to paid internships at the school, or in area businesses.

"I have former students who are now working in IT and this gave them valuable skills. I've also had students who did the internship and conclude that this isn't for them. They've saved a lot of money because they could find that out before they went to college," she says. "Either way, our students benefit."

Students who have completed the Acer certification and are interested in pursuing computer repair as a career can take courses at a nearby community college, or they can find work that is much more interesting than the jobs teenagers most commonly have while still in school.

"When they complete the Acer certification, they have the opportunity to earn credits and do this repair work in high school," she says. "And they're able to gain experience that they'll be able to apply to a valuable career."



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