

CASE STUDY



Tracking Chromebooks with RFID: A Class Act

Rochester Public Schools and Metalcraft partner for Chromebook inventory solution

Chromebooks are the dominant portable computing devices purchased by schools for students today due to their ability to increase efficiency and productivity in the classroom. In addition, they are a more cost-effective option than other mobile computers.

Pre-COVID, it was estimated that 40 million Chromebooks were being used in education. This number dramatically increased in our post-COVID world. In K-12 districts, Chromebooks now account for 40 to 60 percent of all school and/or district purchases.

Like many other school districts across the country, Rochester (NY) Public Schools uses Chromebooks in their classrooms. The district consists of over 24,000 students throughout their 62 schools. They currently own and need to inventory over 30,000 Chromebooks.

The previous process for inventorying Chromebooks used the individual barcode cards and was very labor intensive. The person doing the inventory had to open the Chromebook cart and physically remove them from each slot to get a scan. "That in itself could be someone's full-time job," said Timothy Johnsen, Executive Director of Instructional Technology with Rochester Public Schools. "We wanted to find something that would make the process more efficient."

In addition, Johnsen and his team wanted to find an identification product that wouldn't just work, but would also be nearly impossible to remove. "Kids are always picking at the labels on things," he said. "We wanted to find something that would not just work, but be permanently adhered to the Chromebook."

Johnsen and his team were really interested in pursuing RFID as their tracking technology for the Chromebook application, but they were unsure of where to start. An internet search for RFID tags produced Metalcraft as a potential supplier. They reached out to Metalcraft and, after qualifying their application internally, the Metalcraft team sent out test samples for Johnsen and his team to test.

They ultimately decided on Metalcraft's Universal Micro RFID Tag due to its excellent read range and durable construction. The Universal Micro's patented inlay design gets excellent read ranges regardless of the surface, but it is specifically tuned to perform on metal. In addition, the subsurface printing and durable polyester combined with the strong adhesive protects printed copy against cleanings and abrasion - including curious students who pick at labels.

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**TIMOTHY
JOHNSEN**

Rochester Public Schools

RESULT

Johnsen stated that the RFID tags work great in their Chromebook application. "With RFID, we can just open the cart door and scan the entire contents without removing each one," he said. "It's twenty-five times less work per cart."

The RFID tags have also held up extremely well in the classroom environment. "We get great tag performance and have had no complaints," he said. The tags are even surviving kids picking at the tags. "We've had Chromebooks destroyed but the RFID tag is still viable."