



**WINTERS** INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Virtualization Drives Down Desktop Support Costs for Winters Independent School District

### Background

Like many districts, Winters Independent School District in Winters, Texas, was caught in a costly yearly cycle of replacing a segment of outdated PCs every summer in preparation for the new school year. The rural district – with 650 students and some 500 desktop machines to support – was spending vast amounts of its small IT staff’s time upgrading hardware and software across its three campuses. “We would rotate around the district and replace a certain number of computers in one location every year,” according to David Hutton, Superintendent for Schools. “We were constantly investing in upgrading our PCs and software.”

### Challenges

As it eyed budget constraints and increasingly rapid changes in technology, district leaders realized they needed to change how they managed desktops in order to improve efficiency, save on labor costs, extend PC lifecycles, and centralize management. Considering the rapid pace of technological change, “we realized that we were going to have to be innovative,” said Hutton. “Rather than replacing technology, we needed to extend what we had. Virtual Bridges was a perfect fit.”

### Enter Virtual Bridges

Winters selected Virtual Bridges VERDE to serve as its desktop virtualization solution, helping to move processing power and software away from the user’s desktop and to centrally located servers, where it can be managed far more easily. With VERDE, Winters dramatically simplified the traditional headache of desktop management in classrooms and labs, improved system control and security, and extended the life of aging desktop machines.

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By moving user desktops to a central server and using Virtual Bridges VERDE, Winters eliminated the need to track, maintain, upgrade, repair, and keep virus-free all the desktop and notebook computers scattered across the district. Instead, operating systems and applications are maintained in a central location by IT staff. Users access a “virtual” version of their own desktop whenever they log on, for a PC-like experience that provides ready access to RAM, disk, and I/O resources. Personal items such as documents, settings, and bookmarks are stored separately and automatically blended into each user session, delivering a fully personalized desktop.

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The district now has a single management console to upgrade desktops as needed on a central server. Re-imaging a lab full of computers, a time-consuming task each summer, is now a simple matter of deploying a single master copy from one central server-based unit. “It cuts down on time and manpower, and we believe it will save on many other long-term costs as well,” noted Hutton.

The district is running a broad range of software, including various iterations of Windows, Linux, and Apple operating systems and desktops, all of which are supported by Virtual Bridges. With VERDE, the same installed image is used for virtual desktops for any of those machines. Previously, specific software had to be installed on each Windows or Macintosh machine individually. At Winters ISD, Virtual Bridges runs on top of the district’s Ubuntu Linux operating system and requires almost no attention. “It takes care of itself,” according to Jeremy Fluhmann, technology director. “We hardly ever touch the Linux side, just the Virtual Bridges management console.”

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## Looking Forward

There's another advantage to Virtual Bridges' VERDE, one which both Hutton and Fluhmann expect will realize even more savings for the district over time: With a mix of old and new PCs across the three campuses, virtual desktop technology will help in extending the life of older machines. Because VDI shifts most of the processing power to a central server, there's no need to continually update desktops with new and more powerful PCs.

That will help as teachers become increasingly sophisticated in their use of technology. Video presentations, virtual field trips, and complex lab setups will all require more computing power and management. With VERDE in place, Winters ISD can continue to use the PCs it already has, and can handily manage and control complex applications and uses from central servers.

Other rural school districts in the region, who are wrestling with some of the same issues as Winters -- aging desktops, small IT support staffs, and ever-increasing technology demands -- are watching the district closely to see the results. "We're definitely on the cutting edge here," said Hutton.

## The Benefits

- Reduced time, manpower and costs of managing desktops
- Improved system control and security
- Extended the life of valuable technology investments
- Gained flexibility to allow students and faculty to access to desktops regardless of location.

## About Virtual Bridges

*Virtual Bridges VERDE is the first purpose-built desktop management and provisioning solution that leverages virtualization to deliver desktops either on-premises or in the cloud. VERDE's VDI Gen2 solution helps enterprises transform desktop TCO by simplifying desktop management, improving security and compliance, and increasing organizational agility for online, offline and branch environments.*

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