

# York Region District School Board

Lexmark quickly attends to York Region District School Board's emergency need for electronic document scanning

## Challenge

For more than a decade, teachers in Ontario's York Region District have used pre-printed bubble sheets to mark students absent or tardy. The sheets were collected daily and fed into optical scanners to generate attendance reports. That method worked fine. In 2008, when the IT staff implemented a new district-wide Trillium Student Information Management™ software system, the board saw no need for change.

Though sticking with the scanners seemed prudent, serious and unexpected problems arose. The decade-old proprietary scanners were incompatible with both the new Trillium software and the district's Citrix® operating environment, which was installed to cut IT costs through desktop, application and server virtualization. The predicament reached crisis proportions when the new school year was just weeks away and the scanner vendor was still unable to solve the problem. "We needed a solution very quickly," said Russ Coles, the district's senior manager of computer applications.

The problem also shed light on other long-simmering issues. Pre-printed bubble sheets were costly to purchase and process. To guard against running out, a significant inventory was required, eating up valuable storage space and budget. Said Coles, "We finally reached a point where we could no longer work with our current solution."



## Meet York Region District School Board

Canada's York Region District School Board (YRDSB), the third largest in Ontario, serves 113,000 students, has opened 73 new schools since 1999, and is scheduled to open 11 more between 2009 and 2012. The district's 2008-2009 budget exceeds \$987 million.

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**Russ Coles**

Senior Manager, Computer Applications  
York Region District School Board

## Solution

With the need to select and install a proven solution rapidly becoming an emergency, the district turned to Lexmark, a longtime leader in furnishing turnkey integrated scanning applications to schools and colleges. In just two days, Lexmark developed and presented a proposal. Within a week, pilot tests were fully functional in four schools.

The Lexmark solution had already been certified by Trillium as fully compatible. The solution was installed jointly by Lexmark field engineers and YRDSB IT staffers and executed flawlessly. Won over by Lexmark’s response and solution, the YRDSB purchased the Lexmark Attendance Scanning Solution for all 31 of its secondary schools just days later. One month later, attendance scanning with Lexmark technology was up and running in every school in the district.

“This is really the story of an emergency and Lexmark’s responsiveness to that emergency,” said Coles. “Our challenge was that we had to deliver a workable system for our staff that integrated well with our student information system. Lexmark provided the solution in record time. And then, the business case for rolling the solution out to every school in the district was simply the best thing to do.”

The solution consists of two components: A Lexmark multifunction product (MFP) in each school and Lexmark software for creating, scanning and routing forms electronically. A custom script provided the final integration with Trillium. Lexmark MFPs seamlessly blend a business-class laser printer, auto-feed document scanner, copier and network fax into a single space-saving unit. The Lexmark software, installed on an available server, provided the district with tools to design and print its own bubble sheets on plain paper and discontinue the purchase and use of expensive pre-printed forms.

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With little time remaining for deployment, the district worked out an implementation plan of 10 schools per week-two every day. Less than four weeks later, the Lexmark Attendance Scanning Solution was up and running in all locations.

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**Bill Vansickle**

Assistant Manager, Purchasing Services  
York Region District School Board

## Results

Beyond meeting its critical deadline, the YRDSB’s choice of Lexmark is yielding broader benefits.

The district is saving nearly \$200,000 over five years by replacing its existing scanners and software with the Lexmark solution. Future expansion of bubble sheets to encompass student exams would lead to additional quantifiable savings down the road. These are “impressive dollars that we can put back into the classroom,” said Bill Vansickle, assistant manager, purchasing services.

Moving from expensive pre-printed forms to plain paper print-on-demand ones eliminated the need to maintain an inventory. And though “going green” was not a key focus of the project, the team discovered that using genuine Lexmark high-yield toner cartridges stretched the time between replacement and lowered costs.

“Lexmark seemed to be the only company that listened and actually came up with a solid solution for attendance scanning,” said Vansickle. “The account manager and technical representative from Lexmark implemented and executed flawlessly. They were there during and after deployment to provide any training and support we needed.”

The York Region District School Board had to become a quick study in choosing, deploying and integrating a comprehensive document workflow solution with other IT systems. Fortunately, Lexmark, an experienced leader in providing solutions to school systems, colleges and governmental agencies, understood not only the environment, but the district’s sense of urgency. From the York Region District School Board, Lexmark earns high grades.

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