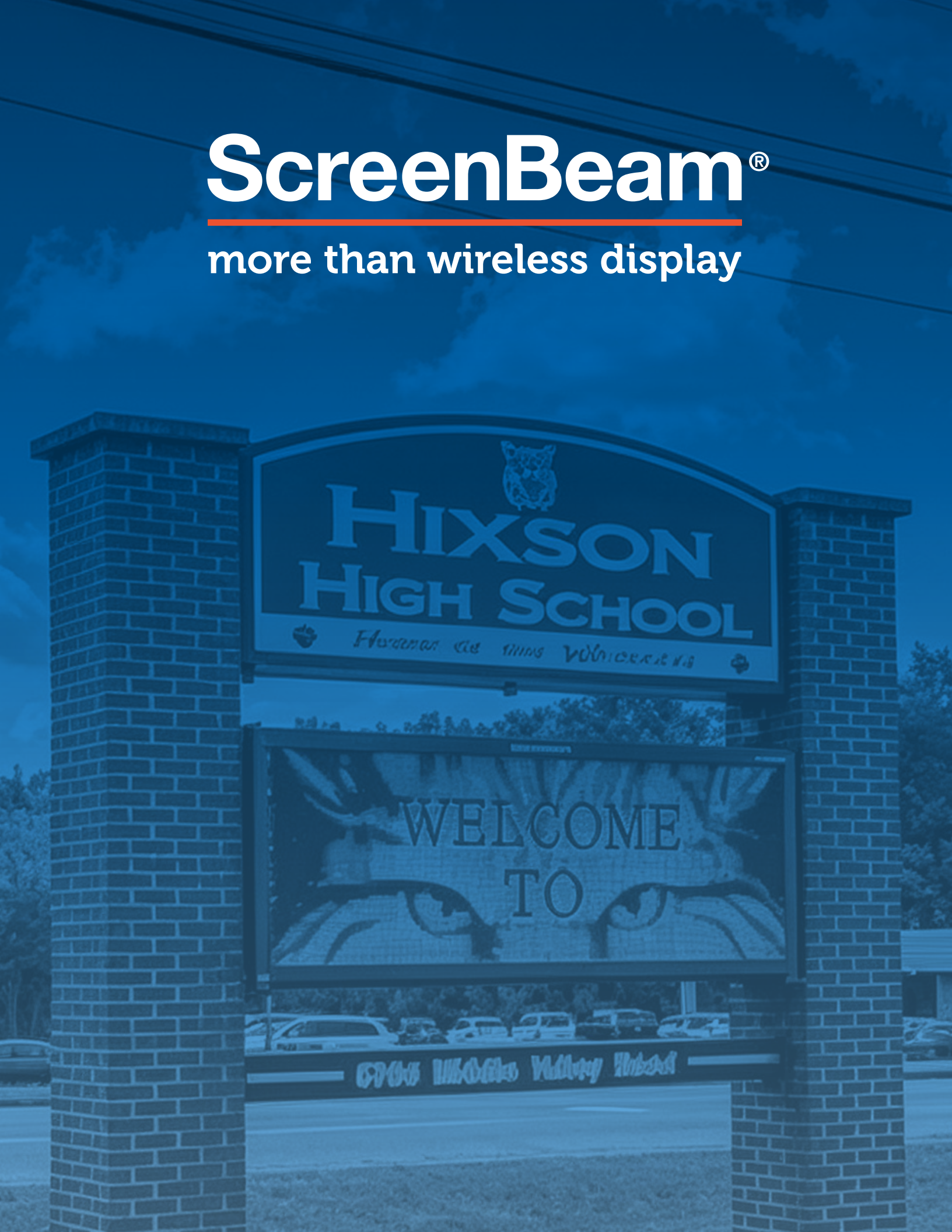
ScreenBeam®

more than wireless display



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Students and Teachers Team up to Win Grant for ScreenBeam Technology

By Andy McDonough

While funding for public schools has increased moderately in recent years, the actual increase in buying power is heavily debated. Once inflation, labor needs, and rising overhead costs (like healthcare and transportation) are factored in, the bottom line calculations often paint a very different picture. Those numbers provide school controllers with a good argument that the resulting, usable per-student funds have actually stagnated or even fallen short in many instances. When that happens, school districts struggle to appropriately fund all their needs. But rather than do without or "push off" until next year important capital investments that could help students today, an innovative grant program in Hamilton County, TN is helping their district's schools to "get creative" and look past the limits of district funding. The grant program not only awarded Hixson High School a $10,000 grant to upgrade their classroom technology with ScreenBeam wireless receivers, but also afforded the program's participants a unique opportunity to develop both the skills needed to apply for other grants and the know-how to engage with community partners for even more support.

Proof of Concept

Leann Plumlee, an assistant principal and curriculum coach at Hixson High School, played a pivotal role facilitating the addition of ScreenBeam devices into Hixson's classrooms. "We had seen how ScreenBeam wireless receivers had simplified connectivity and classrooms at other Hamilton schools and nearby Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences," said Plumlee. "ScreenBeam made presenting easier for teachers by doing away with the cabling hassle in the classroom. More importantly, it freed teachers up to move around the classroom to be more engaged with students. That was something we wanted for our students as well."

Plumlee worked closely with John Simon, the district's executive director of Information Technology, who had set up a proof-of-concept with 20 ScreenBeam 1000EDU Gen2 wireless receivers at the district's STEM high school. "As our STEM High School focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, it was the ideal place to install and trial the new technology," noted Simon. After a successful proof of concept, Simon and his team began to deploy ScreenBeam wireless receivers to other schools, including a full implementation at Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences (CSAS). "Hixson High School had the opportunity to see the success and improved classroom efficiency at CSAS," recalled Simon, " and requested a demonstration for their school."

Hixson High School, with its outstanding record of academic achievements, boasts a "Future Ready" initiative focused on preparing students for college and modern careers where understanding and effectively using technology are key. Through that program, Hixson coordinates with the district's North River Future Ready Center that provides students with hands-on, career-focused learning that prepares them for thriving careers in high-demand fields. Students are afforded the opportunity to participate in specialized programs designed to bridge the gap between high school and higher education, or students can choose programs to learn about Culinary Arts, Nursing, Veterinary and Animal Science, Automotive Maintenance, Cosmetology, Digital Art and Design, Machining Technology, Structural Systems, and Welding. By successfully completing these programs, students can earn college credit or technical certifications to get a head start on their post-graduation plans.

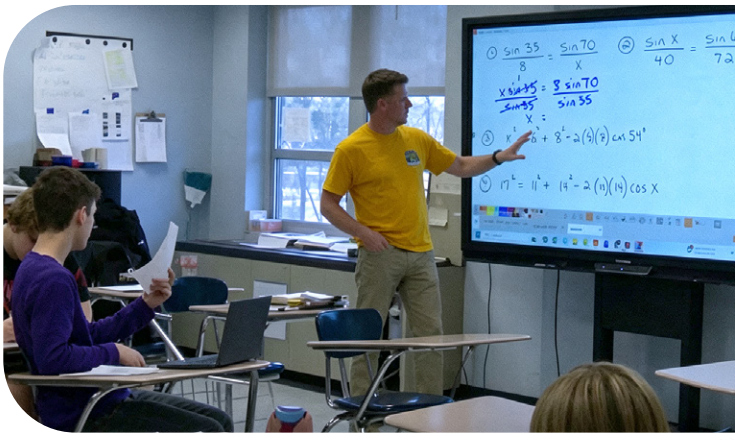
Plumlee and her SRDI grant team worked with teachers to explore how ScreenBeam technology would facilitate learning in the classroom as she and Simon compared the performance and operation of the 1000EDU Gen2 to other connectivity solutions used at Hixson and elsewhere in the district. What Plumlee and her team learned from their hands-on experience with ScreenBeam technology let them know they were on the right track.

Travis Clem, a math teacher at the school, pointed to how the new technology helped him become more closely connected to students during the proof-of-concept. "As a math teacher, the ScreenBeam device has allowed me to move throughout the classroom while still displaying notes, examples, and student work. Instead of standing at the board, I can check for understanding in real time, answer questions, and provide immediate feedback. The increased mobility helps me stay connected with students and creates a more interactive learning environment where students are actively engaged in the lesson."

“The teachers who participated in the proof of concept were pleased with the overall experience of our ScreenBeam trial, and appreciated the greater ease-of-use, the interactive nature of the ScreenBeam technology, and especially the freedom to move away from the front of the classroom,” Plumlee recalled. “Also, learning about the device’s reliability, price point, built-in applications, and its ability to easily connect multiple devices like our Lenovo tablets and other Chromebook devices was key to our decision to move to ScreenBeam.”

About ScreenBeam 1000EDU Gen2

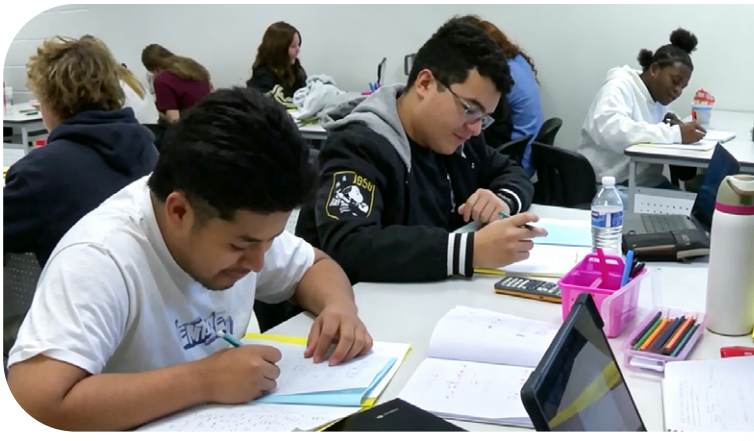
ScreenBeam 1000EDU Gen2 wireless receivers have had unprecedented success in demanding educational settings like Hixson High School. Unlike other connectivity solutions that can require multiple steps to connect or a special cable or dongle, ScreenBeam wireless receivers often represent the easiest choice for educational settings because their wireless connectivity is simple and their operation is reliable. By leveraging the three most popular native display protocols (Miracast, AirPlay, and Google Cast), ScreenBeam devices allow users to quickly connect and share content using any device without installing proprietary apps or using dongles. With ScreenBeam connectivity, educators at Hixson would be able to connect any personal device quickly to the school’s standard 75” flat panel displays, then move more freely around their classrooms. While everyone benefits from hassle-free connectivity, students additionally benefit by being empowered to share their screens with the class and collaborate with unparalleled ease.



Having experienced the 1000EDU Gen2 trial installation, Jennifer Rimback, a school counselor, recognized a powerful benefit of screen sharing that isn't enumerated in the unit's technical specifications. "One of the things I am most excited about with the new ScreenBeam devices is the flexibility they provide for both our teachers and students," she said. "When teachers are no longer tied to the front of the room, they can move more freely, build stronger relationships with students, and provide support where it is needed most. From a counseling perspective, increased engagement and connection can have a positive impact on student confidence, participation, and overall school belonging."

Past the benefits of simple connectivity and freedom from cumbersome wired-connections, the low-latency and natural experience when using ScreenBeam's advanced wireless display technology make the 1000EDU a favorite of technology designers who value the user experience, reliable operation, and flexibility of network setup. Integrators appreciate that ScreenBeam devices are simple to install with a straight-forward connection to any network via wired Ethernet or through their own wireless access points. That includes creating powerful network configurations like dual-network setups with ScreenBeam's Central Management System (CMS). An important time-saving feature for institutions like Hamilton County School District that has 24 high school locations, ScreenBeam's full-featured CMS allows for centralized device management of up to 5,000 devices and is included with the purchase of ScreenBeam wireless receivers.

In addition to ScreenBeam's CMS, which Simon and his IT team already had in place to manage ScreenBeam wireless receivers previously installed in other district schools, the 1000EDU purchase provides Hixson High School users with a set of impressive classroom and administrative tools like ScreenBeam's Whiteboard application that lets teachers launch a collaborative whiteboard directly on any USB-connected interactive display without a laptop. Another useful application, Message Manager, keeps school administration in touch using ScreenBeam devices to deliver messages directly to any classroom. Including useful applications that don't require subscriptions or extra fees makes ScreenBeam wireless receivers an ideal choice for modern education settings with flexible and evolving learning environments.



By collaborating with educational institutions at all levels, ScreenBeam developers have produced a set of administrative tools that turn ScreenBeam-enabled displays into something more. For example, schools can run digital signage on screens when they're not in use to share announcements and events, as well as display simple widgets (like time, calendars, and weather). For emergency situations, ScreenBeam's included notification system is proving to be a gamechanger for many schools.

Alert+, ScreenBeam's recently upgraded emergency notification system with the AlertPlus mobile app, takes school security to a new level with its ability to instantly broadcast urgent messages (like lockdowns, evacuations, or weather warnings) to any classroom or conference room display connected to a ScreenBeam receiver. Powerful features, like Instant Overrides where emergency messages can immediately interrupt any active presentation, lesson, or digital signage, can alert an entire school at once. The application even offers real-time visibility and check-in features so administrators can immediately see which classrooms have acknowledged an alert and are safe.

Because Alert+ works on your network with existing ScreenBeam receivers no additional hardware is required, just a firmware update or admin license. Of course, it supports national standards for response protocols, and it can automatically tie into leading emergency management and safety platforms like Raptor Technologies, Centegix, Singlewire InformaCast, and CrisisGo.

ScreenBeam continues to expand their tool set to better support teaching and collaboration in the classroom with optional add-on applications such as Active Learning, which supports collaborative and interactive learning experiences, including group-based activities and lab environments; and Orchestrate, a classroom management tool that integrates with free AI tools like MicroSoft CoPilot, allowing educators to use AI to draft tests, automate repetitive tasks, and develop engaging graphics–even collaborate in real time with AI support.

Finding a Creative Path to Funding

The successful trial of ScreenBeam wireless receivers at Hixson High School left teachers wanting the new technology, but lacking the funding to upgrade the 49 academic classrooms at Hixson with ScreenBeam wireless receivers. To address the funding issue, Plumlee and her SRDI grant team looked to the district's School Resource Development Institute (SRDI). SRDI is a year-long professional development institute that challenges schools to "dream big" for their students, then equips and empowers chosen applicants to acquire resources to make those dreams a reality. Hixson High School hoped to receive some of that funding to purchase 1000EDU Gen2 devices for the coming school year.

What makes Hamilton County's SRDI program stand out is that it isn't a typical apply-for-and-receive grant program. Rather, it is a sustained learning experience for the applicant teams that teaches the skills required to win grants and promotes engagement with the community. Over the course of a year, participating teams attend facilitated sessions that teach participants how to prioritize school needs; write a grant; understand fundraising, in-kind donations and corporate giving; and work with resource networks. Finally, participants learn about stewardship and how to develop and polish a pitch. The process culminates in a Pitch Event luncheon where participants present their initiative to a committee made up of representatives from the institute's leadership; local city and county commissioners; and community business leaders who score the projects to determine which teams are awarded funding. The guided process provides participating teams with valuable grant development and proposal skills, establishing a sustainable model to follow in future years with continued support from the SRDI facilitators.

In preparation of an inclusive pitch to present at the SRDI Pitch Event, Plumlee and her team used the skills learned in the SRDI sessions to build a proposal, assembling the financial and technical details of the proposed ScreenBeam purchase along with specifics of how ScreenBeam technology would benefit the students at Hixson High School. In addition to communicating that the school was deserving of the financial support, it was key for the team to win over the committee of SRDI facilitators by explaining how both teachers and students would benefit from using ScreenBeam technology in the classroom. In particular, the team needed to explain how the new technology would be used in support of "active" vs "passive" learning. This was to address any concerns that the facilitators might have that the new technology might be used to foster a less effective passive learning approach.

The Hixson High School grant applicants enlisted students to help with the pitch by having them create a video introducing the school, its mission to empower students and its commitment to academic excellence. "The students did a great job making a video about the educational and community experience at our school," says Plumlee. "They also cleverly used their social media and communications skills to build anticipation in the community, regularly releasing information about the upcoming release of the video and pitch events. The team then coordinated the "big reveal" with statewide Give Back Days to increase public awareness of the school's financial needs and the grant process." Plumlee's team were also able to include data in their presentation from other schools in the district that had ScreenBeam wireless receivers. That data showed a marked improvement in students' testing scores in subjects where classrooms had ScreenBeam technology.

A Winning Plan for the Future

With a winning presentation in the Hamilton County 2026 SRDI grant competition, Hixson High School was awarded a $10,000 grant for the new ScreenBeam wireless receivers. Other Hamilton County schools also received grants, and all participants gained invaluable experience in presenting grant proposals and creating public appeals to fund essential educational needs. According to Karen Hollis, Grants Coordinator for Federal Programs in Hamilton County, "Mrs. Plumlee and her team did a wonderful presentation at our Pitch Event that highlighted the importance of [the new] technology in the classrooms and how it would benefit their students." To add to the grant award, additional funding for Hixson High School's ScreenBeam purchase came from community partners as a direct result of the publicity campaign to engage the community.

"Our teachers are excited to begin using the new technology," says Plumlee. "We are grateful for the grant and for those in the community who provided additional funding, but also for the opportunity and experience of coming together to make a difference that will move our schools forward. Involving the students and seeing the collaboration with the teachers and school administration was a wonderful thing."

Hixson High School will have ScreenBeam technology in every classroom next year, kicking off with train-the-trainer sessions starting this summer. Devices are being shipped to Simon and his IT team for provisioning before being deployed to classrooms after which IT will maintain and centrally manage the devices via ScreenBeam's CMS. "Our district plan now is to have a ScreenBeam [wireless receiver] in every classroom," says Simon, "and secondarily in other areas for messaging. To that end, we are currently looking at schools in the district who are in need of classroom tools or school messaging systems or just ready to upgrade to ScreenBeam wireless receivers."