



## VMware Horizon View Supports Common Core State Standards Initiative and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Testing Platform at Somerset School District in Wisconsin

### INDUSTRY

K-12 education

### REGION:

Americas

### SIZE

Three campuses; 1,600 students

### CUSTOMER PROFILE

The School District of Somerset, Wisconsin—a leader in progressive education and community collaboration—is committed to developing educated and responsible citizens who successfully adapt and contribute to the changing global society.

### PRODUCT

- VMware® Horizon View™
- VMware vSphere®

### Snapshot

For three years, Wisconsin's Somerset School District has been using VMware Horizon View to update its aging desktop fleet and streamline desktop management. In May 2013, the K-12 district was selected to participate in a pilot program to test the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) platform to meet the requirements of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Horizon View eased the deployment of the rigorous testing platform and delivered a seamless user experience to students.

### Business Challenges

- Replace aging desktop fleet
- Reliably and securely support the SBAC testing platform with limited IT resources

### Triggers

- PC migration/hardware refresh
- Device and application proliferation
- Lower support costs

### Solution

Horizon View made it easy for a resource-constrained Wisconsin K-12 school district to deploy the SBAC testing platform and provide a seamless user experience to students.

### Benefits

- Secure, responsive, and reliable testing environment to meet Common Core State Standards, delivered using the SBAC platform
- Streamlined desktop management, reducing IT time and effort

### Use Case

Centralized, high-availability desktop

***“With VMware Horizon View, we didn’t experience any technical issues when we did the [Smarter Balanced] pilot. People were concerned about audio sound quality, videos, mouse movements—those things that are critical in high-stakes testing—but we saw no performance issues whatsoever in our environment. The virtual environment performed the way we expected it to, and we’re very happy with the results.”***

Ryan Sicard  
Director of IT  
Somerset School District

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### Situation

Somerset School District serves the townships of Somerset, Star Prairie, Richmond, and St. Joseph in Wisconsin. It is one of the fastest-growing school districts in the state. “Learning Today to Succeed Tomorrow” is the vision for Somerset School District, and its mission is to develop motivated, educated, and responsible citizens who are prepared to successfully adapt to the changing global environment. The district has three campuses and approximately 1,600 students.

About three years ago, the district began to assess its aging desktop fleet. “Some of them were seven or eight years old,” explains Ryan Sicard, IT director for Somerset School District. “We were always managing our desktops from a traditional imaging standpoint. We were looking for a different way to manage—to be more nimble, more flexible going forward, so that we could handle different initiatives the district was undertaking.”

Because the K-12 district had successfully deployed vSphere for server consolidation more than seven years earlier, Somerset School District looked to VMware for a desktop virtualization solution. Somerset School District selected Horizon View to increase flexibility and ease IT desktop management challenges.

In 2013, when Somerset School District was selected by the State of Wisconsin to participate in a pilot program for the SBAC platform to comply with the Common Core State Standards Initiative, Somerset’s two-person IT department had to prove that Horizon View would be responsive and secure enough for this high-stakes testing.

The SBAC is a state-led consortium working to develop next-generation assessments that accurately measure student progress toward college- and career-readiness. SBAC is one of two multistate consortia awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Education in 2010 to develop an assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards by the 2014-15 school year.

### Solution

When Horizon View was first implemented in 2009, the virtual desktop solution enabled Somerset School District to make some infrastructure improvements behind the scenes while still leveraging its old hardware. Since then, the district has transitioned to thin-client technology—lowering its TCO for acquiring hardware and reducing endpoint replacement and maintenance efforts.

Horizon View is a complete virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) solution that simplifies desktop management and provides remote users with what they need, when they need it.

A proven solution that Somerset School District’s IT team built on each year, Horizon View was tapped in 2013 to support SBAC pilot testing for Somerset fifth- and sixth-grade English language arts students.

According to Sara Eichten, principal at Somerset Middle School, “The Common Core State Standards have drastically changed what we need to be doing with our students in both English language arts and mathematics, as well as focusing on disciplinary literacy in science, social studies, and other related arts classes.” Standards formerly taught in later grade levels have been moved earlier, and students are required to have higher levels of critical thinking skills.

SBAC testing requires use of a secure browser. After the browser is launched, students cannot leave the page to open other Web pages or applications. They can only take the proctored test during the time period allotted. When testing is completed, students are permitted to close the browser and resume using their regular virtual desktop applications.

***“One of the nice things with VMware Horizon View is the rapid ability to recompose with new software and make it available to our students overnight, so we didn’t have to touch 500 computers that our students were testing on.”***

Ryan Sicard  
Director of IT  
Somerset School District

“We had to download the Smarter Balanced browser—their secure browser—so all of our students had access to it, and then we had to coordinate testing,” explains Eichten. “It was very eye-opening for me, as the principal, and for my staff members to see the level of rigor and the application that our students had to have throughout the English arts portion because it was no longer just the read-and-respond comprehension-type questions that we used with the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts exams. Rather, it was take this, make inferences, read different articles, listen to videos, and sit down and compose at the computer—very different skills than how we formerly were assessing our students.”

During the SBAC pilot program, Somerset School District’s IT team was confident in the performance of its secure, reliable virtualized desktop solution. “Our district was fortunate enough to do other online testing, so we had a lot of experience and our staff and students were familiar with it,” says Sicard. “We had a good baseline and we were comfortable.”

Prior to the testing, all software applications were centralized by Somerset School District’s IT staff to manage as a single image, saving time and easing maintenance. Because it used Horizon View to also deliver the testing software, Somerset School District’s Sicard found, “We were easily able to roll out the required software in a timely fashion. It enabled us to make sure every piece of hardware out there in the district all had the minimum software on it. Students logged on normally and launched the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium browser like any other application.”

Using Horizon View, Somerset School District was able to rapidly recompose with new software and make it available overnight, avoiding the need to touch the more than 500 computers that students were using for testing. Sicard explains, “We could simply update our master image, recompose, and make that available to our students the next day, and we had the required software needed for the online testing. We were able to deploy the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium software through recomposing in a very quick and efficient way.”

Horizon View also provided the level of security required for critical testing. According to Sicard, “We saw no issues with test security using the secure browser in our Horizon View environment, and we were very happy with the results.”

Horizon View is deployed on HP Blade Servers with EMC storage. Student and staff endpoints are typically HP thin clients running most traditional Microsoft Office and Adobe K-12 desktop applications.

### Benefits

For more than three years, Horizon View desktop virtualization has enabled Somerset School District to increase IT flexibility and overcome IT management challenges. Now, Horizon View has also proven that it can securely and reliably support the SBAC platform to comply with the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

For resource-constrained IT teams like Somerset School District’s, centralized management through Horizon View supports a centralized help desk, saving technicians time because they no longer need to travel between campuses to troubleshoot.

Desktop virtualization has enabled Somerset School District to achieve all of its original objectives: keeping some of its aging computers longer, streamlining IT management, and meeting the requirements of many of the district’s new initiatives such as SBAC testing. At Somerset School District, Horizon View seems to be earning straight As.

***“Somerset School District has had a great experience with VMware Horizon View and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium testing. I would highly recommend it as a platform for anyone facing the same challenges we are.”***

Ryan Sicard  
Director of IT  
Somerset School District

## About VMware Horizon Suite

VMware® Horizon™ Suite, the platform for workforce mobility, connects end users to their data and applications on any device without compromising IT security and control. The suite includes the following products:

### VMware Horizon View

Simplify desktop management, security, and control while delivering an optimum end-user computing experience across all devices and networks.

### VMware® Horizon Mirage™

Gain centralized, zero-touch physical and virtual desktop image management with native performance and flexibility for end users.

### VMware® Horizon Workspace™

Streamline the end-user experience and reduce costs with a single workspace for applications and data, delivered securely on any device.

### VMware® vCenter™ Operations Manager for Horizon View™

Monitor and optimize the health, performance, and efficiency of your entire VDI.

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