



**Getting the Most from  
Your Next Phone System**

## CISCO SMB CLASS SOLUTIONS

### District Uses Cisco IP Communications to Enhance Learning and Reduce Costs

K-12 students, faculty, and the residents of Penticton, British Columbia are the beneficiaries of a multimedia network based on Cisco technology that merges phone calls with computer data across the Okanagan-Skaha School District #67.

The Canadian school district recently integrated a new Cisco IP Communications voice solution with its data communications network, providing students with new ways to enhance their learning experiences. The converged network also simplifies administrative processes and has reduced annual telecommunications costs by CDN\$60,000, says Ron Shongrunden, assistant secretary-treasurer of the district.

The savings come from reduced phone usage and maintenance expenses. The lighter support load is a result of having just one network to administer for voice and data, and new automated calling processes.

The network supports about 8000 students and staff across 22 buildings, allowing teacher, student, and staff collaboration anytime, anywhere within the district or outside the district.

### Expanded Learning and Information Sharing

District #67 students now have access to video archives of teaching sessions. Students can use the recordings to supplement their classroom and book learning.

Also, students and staff can tap into community-wide information via a private fiber-optic network. This gives students the opportunity to learn about “real-world” employment and educational opportunities.

Another benefit of the Cisco IP Communications solution is reduced phone line usage charges. The private network has allowed the district to reduce its number of external phone lines from 150 to 25, contributing to the annual telecommunications savings, says Shongrunden.

### Automated Calling Cuts Expenses

The district built a self-service call center, which combines automatic call distribution (ACD) and interactive voice response (IVR) technology with the district’s Website. Individuals in the community can easily find information about district-wide school policies, schedules, and lessons.

The call center automatically contacts parents with recorded messages about upcoming parent-teacher conferences and events. And it places automated calls to substitute teachers when they are needed. The call-out system saves the district \$20,000 per year in administrative costs, Shongrunden estimates.

### A Guide for the K-12 Community

If your phone system is aging, it’s time to start thinking strategically about what steps to take. It pays to find a communications system that does more than merely transfer calls among fixed telephone stations throughout your school district.

Imagine if your faculty and staff could use their phones to do the following:

- Take attendance
- Issue and check hall passes
- View a list of daily school activities
- Pre-approve student absences
- Retrieve all voice, e-mail, and fax messages from one mailbox
- Broadcast text notifications of meetings and other events to a predefined list of people

In fact, it’s possible for them to do all these things today—while you reduce your capital and system maintenance costs.

All you need is a modern communications system and accompanying plug-and-play phones.

### Reduce Your District’s Expenses

Phone systems built on Internet technology are less expensive to own and operate over time than legacy systems. Yesterday’s equipment uses technology that is proprietary to each phone manufacturer. It costs more. And it requires that the vendor perform most of the ongoing maintenance—at a significant cost to you.

By contrast, today’s communications solutions offer many ways to reduce phone-related expenses:

- **One network to manage, not two.** Newer phones integrate voice communications with your computer systems and Web applications; so you only have one communications network to administer instead of two. As information about new or temporary employees is entered into your human resources database, for example, it is also automatically added to your phone directory. This eliminates having to manually re-enter an individual’s information.
- **Toll bypass.** You can use the new communications system to bypass the public telephone network, thereby eliminating toll charges for on-network calls. If you have multiple locations, you can piggyback your phone calls onto the district network. This can provide a significant savings in operational expenses and can enable your budget to shift to academic functions.

Cisco IP phones, with text messaging and automated directory services, are in every classroom. Using the directory, teachers and staff can quickly place calls by clicking on a name or functional job title on their phone displays.

The district is considering adding a video surveillance system to the network. This way, security personnel could view real-time videos of what's going on around campus from their phone handset displays. They could quickly make calls from the same device using the automated directory, if needed.

All in all, integrating Cisco IP Communications has saved Okanagan Skaha money while giving faculty and staff—and even the public—communications and information capabilities they didn't have before. With Cisco IP Communications, costs went down, while service went up.

- **No-cost moves and changes.** Because today's phones use "mobile" extensions, there are no operations costs when a staff member moves from one office or school to another. Or when new or temporary employees come on board. You simply plug in the phone and you are done.
- **An investment that works today and in the future.** These communications systems have the ability to work with future technologies, unlike older equipment. They can expand incrementally in the quantity of phones and applications supported, at the pace you require. This is much more cost-effective than having to invest in significant upgrades or replacements to add a phone, a new site, or new application.

All of these functions and characteristics represent hard savings that school boards and taxpayers are sure to appreciate.

### **Empower Your Faculty and Staff**

Personnel can make conventional, highly reliable calls with their new phones. They can also do much more to use their time on core functions that focus on student performance and teacher accountability.

Now, employees can access information and applications that help them manage daily, time-consuming administrative functions right from their handsets. For instance, when a teacher takes attendance or a staff member checks a hall pass, photos of students could pop up on the handset screen. Personnel can verify a student's identity, improving accuracy and eliminating time spent on identification errors.

Phone-based personal productivity applications improve faculty and staff operational effectiveness and save them time, which they can put toward other academic activities that are student-focused.

For example, teachers can check their online calendars from their handset displays while talking on the phone. And they can retrieve voice mail, e-mail, and fax messages from a single unified inbox in whichever of these formats they prefer. This makes them more responsive to administrators, parents, and colleagues and improves the working relationship among all stakeholders in the district.

And not having to check multiple messaging inboxes saves each employee about 30 minutes per day, according to productivity studies conducted by independent research firms.

Staff can also tap into an electronic phone directory, click on a name, and instantly connect to a colleague. Or, they can use "functional" electronic phone directories. These allow personnel to call others based on job function. A teacher could call the football coach to discuss a student issue by clicking on a directory entry for that job title.

This is helpful in large schools and for new teachers, substitutes, interns, and temporary personnel who may not know everyone by name.

### **Take Advantage of Built-In Mobility**

School districts in particular benefit from the mobility that newer communications systems inherently provide. Faculty and staff are on the move much of their workdays. It's valuable to have phone extensions that go where they go. By contrast, older phone systems bind each extension to a particular wall jack, so when users leave their desks, they also leave behind the ability to communicate by phone.

With today's communications systems, phone extensions and custom settings (such as speed-dial numbers) remain with roaming employees—even when they visit different buildings within your district. Your workers can simply log onto any available phone with a password.

Another popular option for faculty and staff is wireless phone technology. This allows them to conduct phone conversations, check messages, and perform tasks without even having to find a local phone or phone jack. Wireless phones are particularly useful in urgent or emergency situations.

### **Create a Self-Service Information Center**

You can also use your new communications system to improve the service that you provide to the public. A well-designed system lets you inexpensively run a self-service information center that naturally integrates automatic call distribution (ACD), interactive voice response (IVR), and your Website. This way, students, parents, alumni, and others can easily and quickly find out about school assignments, schedules, and activities. They can do so whenever it is convenient for them and without human resources required on your part.

### **Think Cisco**

Cisco Systems® provides several business-productivity and call-center applications for use with its IP Communications solutions. In addition, your Cisco IP phones can use any application that supports an open, industry-standard application interface called Extensible Markup Language (XML).

You simply store your XML applications on a computer that you attach to the same network as your Cisco IP Communications system. No special software integration effort is needed on your part.

As you consider your options for getting the most out of your communications system, remember that using Cisco equipment simplifies your ability to merge voice calls with data, video, and text information. With Cisco, you run a single platform for which many third-party applications will continue to be developed—both in the K-12 and the general business industry. Your communications structure becomes simpler, not more complex.

By choosing a Cisco IP Communications solution, you're making a decision to go with the technology leader and pioneer in converging voice and data communications. And Cisco's proven financial track record tells you that the company will be here for you today and far into the future.

To learn more about how to make the most out of your next phone system, contact your Cisco IP Communications partner or representative. To locate a Cisco partner in your area, visit:

[www.cisco.com/go/findapartner](http://www.cisco.com/go/findapartner)



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(0304R) 203183 ETMG BM 02.04 Printed in the USA