

CASE STUDY

Frederick County Public Schools



Frederick County (VA) schools connect with an all-weather communication solution

Frederick County Public Schools learned a valuable lesson in December 2000: expect the unexpected. A severe snowstorm paralyzed the region, snarling traffic and causing confusion during the height of the morning rush.

“Our school buses were already on the road when the storm hit,” explains Rob Yost, Director of IT. “Phone service at the district and school offices were unusable because of incoming calls from parents. District headquarters was closing schools for the day, but it couldn’t get the word out.”

Although the school system supports just under 11,000 K-12 students in 20 Ethernet-equipped facilities, it didn’t have a backup plan for telephone service.



Frederick County Middle School

Coincidentally, when faced with addressing the critical issue of security in schools, four of the schools didn't have two-way communications with the school office or phones connecting classrooms to the school office. Frederick County Public Schools chose to address both these issues by leveraging the power of IP Telephony.

Frederick County Public Schools chose Vienna, Virginia-based AAC Associates Inc. (AAC) to design and install an IP Telephony solution that would connect the four schools with district headquarters and provide a backup to the region’s public switched telephone network (PSTN). AAC installed a Cisco CallManager at district headquarters, and connected each school via the metropolitan area network (MAN). By deploying Cisco AVVID IP Telephony, the school district’s system uses their Intranet to provide the primary voice path for communications, with the PSTN serving as a redundant path.



Working smarter, not harder

But this was only the beginning. Because AAC understood the benefits “smart phones” could bring to everyday operations, they programmed these phones to address business processes in the school such as: simplifying taking attendance; automating visitor and hall passes; and posting daily alerts and special events.

The attendance service integrates into the school’s AS/400 Student Information System database, which automatically shares student data and schedule information.

Automating hall passes is aimed at relegating slips of colored paper obsolete. Today, Frederick County schools can use IP phones installed in school hallways to access electronic hall passes. When a student must leave the room during class time, the teacher calls up the student's file on the IP phone and logs the student’s destination. The information is sent to the school’s database and is accessible immediately from any phone in the network. Teachers and hall monitors can use any of the school’s IP phones to call up the student’s file and view the student’s photo to verify identity.

Graduating to more advanced capabilities

Elated with a broader use of their telephone system, Frederick County Schools continue to work with AAC to develop new applications that fully utilize the successful marriage of their voice and data systems.

“We’re glad we did our homework and chose a smart solution,” states Mr. Yost. “It’s like we tell our students: when you have a firm foundation, you can accomplish anything.”



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