

High School Expands Learning Opportunities by Going Online

Executive Summary

Customer Name:

Prospect High School

Industry:

Education

Location:

Saratoga, CA

Number of Employees:

60 faculty members; 1350 students

Challenge:

- Make specialists within district available to greater number of students
- Improve student performance through individualized instruction
- Provide anytime, anywhere learning opportunities expected by today's students

Solution:

- District can extend specialized courses to students districtwide
- Faculty use web meeting applications to enhance instruction and monitor performance
- Students can take advantage of interactive features to engage with instructors remotely

Results:

- Helped ensure that specialized offerings can continue despite budget cuts
- Used distance learning to transcend physical boundaries of campus
- Increased teacher productivity by enabling them to monitor students' work online

Prospect High School uses web conferencing technology to give more students access to specialized courses.

Challenge

Located in Saratoga, California, Prospect High School challenges students to be effective problem solvers who demonstrate respect for themselves, their community, and their environment. This is a tall order to carry out at any time. In a tough economy and on dwindling budgets, it becomes even more challenging.

To meet this challenge and to fulfill Campbell Union High School District's mandate of extending specialized instruction to a greater number of students, the Silicon Valley school began evaluating web-based tools that would allow it to maximize its instructional resources and make them available to the largest number of students. In this way, the school could be certain that specialized offerings like advanced placement courses would be able to continue even in the face of budget cuts and limited enrollment. One instructor at a single location could address a virtual classroom containing students from all of the schools in the district.

Solution

In the 21st-century classroom, real-time collaboration is key. A web-based learning tool must offer strong interactive capabilities and rich collaboration features. Teachers need a tool that can provide them with an overall view of students' progress. Students need a solution that offers them a variety of ways to share work, participate in discussions, and monitor their own progress. Prospect quickly found a tool that satisfied all of these requirements in Cisco WebEx™ meeting applications.

Today, the school is using online training, meeting, and conferencing software in a variety of ways. In business instructor Birgit Bonham's class, students wear headsets and interact via their computers rather than stare at the blackboard. And their teacher, who also wears a headset, addresses a group that includes learners from a high school a mile away. Unlike the core curriculum of math, science, English, and history, the courses Bonham teaches, such as Computer Applications, Digital Design, and Digital Tools, are not offered at every school in the district. With WebEx® applications, that simply is not a problem. Using document sharing, chat, polling, and other interactive features to maintain a lively dialogue with participants, Bonham is able to extend her instruction to other high schools in the district without leaving her classroom or adding more teaching time to her schedule.

The use of Cisco® WebEx technology has also meant increased access to the instructor and better insight into students' progress. Josh Lin, a student in one of Bonham's classes, describes the WebEx educational experience as follows: "In other classes, the attention of the instructor is more spread out, and you can't get the focus of the teacher as easily. This way, I know I can get the attention of the instructor, and that she'll listen to me." For Bonham, whose students are rarely all at the same skill level when they enter her class, WebEx technology allows her to pinpoint those who need help while providing the tools the other students need to work independently. "As a result," says Bonham, "the kids are more focused and seem more able to pick things up at their own pace."

"For the first time in 50 years, we're shifting the focus of the classroom from a physical location to an anytime, anywhere model. That's simply the world kids live in today."

Charles Kanavel, IT director, Campbell Union High School District

Results

By enabling Prospect High School to pool resources and expertise with other schools in Campbell Union High School District and reach students at more than one location, WebEx technology has paved the way for academic excellence to continue despite limited resources and a challenging economy. Thanks to WebEx solutions, Prospect has increased both the reach and breadth of its educational offerings without hiring additional instructors or requiring students or teachers to travel to other campuses. In an era when doing more with less and reducing carbon footprints are the orders of the day, these are significant benefits.

Just as importantly, students and teachers have become more productive since adopting WebEx meeting applications. Says Bonham, "The time I save by not moving from desk to desk to check on students' work lets me devote more time to individualized instruction. I can fit much more into an hour-and-a-half now than I could before." In addition, the WebEx software as a service (SaaS) delivery model means that Prospect faculty and staff are able to focus on educating students rather than trying to figure out how to use, configure, and support the technology.

All of this explains why Campbell Union High School District expects significant cost savings from its use of WebEx solutions. "Take advanced placement courses," says district IT director Charles Kanavel. "Typically, only five or six kids per campus want those classes, making it very expensive to staff an advanced placement class for each school. With WebEx technology, we can reduce that cost dramatically by combining all of those students into a single online classroom. They'll all be at the same level, they'll all progress, and they'll all be guaranteed the same high quality of education. That's the beauty of WebEx technology."

Next Steps

For both Prospect High School and the district at large, WebEx technology has more than delivered on its promise, and Campbell Union High School District is moving forward with plans to use it for everything from classroom access for kids on extended sick leave to bringing in lecturers from around the world. “For the first time in 50 years, we’re shifting the focus of the classroom from a physical location to an anytime, anywhere model,” says Kanel. “That’s simply the world kids live in today.”

For More Information

- To find out more about Cisco WebEx, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/webex>.
- To read other collaboration case studies, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/customers>.
- To provide feedback or participate in the WebEx customer reference program, email: real.results@webex.com.

Product List

Cisco WebEx



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