

From PBX to Cisco IP Telephony: Advantages for Schools

School districts looking for creative ways to thrive despite diminished budgets are finding a surprisingly simple tactic. Replacing each school's private branch exchange (PBX) systems with a centralized IP telephony system reduces costs every month and also has a strong impact on administrative efficiency, safety and security, and home-school communications.

Save Money Every Month

"The current economic climate has made it very appealing to migrate from PBX systems to IP telephony because of the immediate cost savings," says JR Magee, unified collaboration regional manager for the public sector, Cisco. Return on investment comes from:

- **Lower monthly bills:** Instead of paying separate bills for voice and Internet access, schools can use a single IP service provider for both, for more favorable rates.
- **Lower operational costs:** In North Carolina's Cleveland County Public Schools District, most of the 29 elementary, junior high, and high schools now receive their voice, fax, and voicemail services over the network from a centralized Cisco Unified Communications solution in the district's central office. And instead of paying to maintain separate intercom and bell systems, the district uses the built-in speakers of its Cisco Unified IP phones for intercom and bells, using InformaCast software from Singlewire, a Cisco partner. Even when less than one-third of Cleveland County Public Schools used Cisco Unified Communications, the district had reduced its annual telecommunications costs by nearly \$60,000 annually. The savings go toward programs to improve educational excellence and administrative efficiency.
- **Elimination of fees for telephone extension moves, adds, and changes:** In Northern California's Saratoga Union School District, which serves grades K-8, the IT director now performs telephone extension moves, adds, and changes in just five minutes, eliminating service provider fees entirely. Savings amount to \$8000 annually, which the district uses to keep the network up to date.

More Efficient Staff Communications

At Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Minneapolis, Minnesota, teachers move to different classrooms throughout the day, and yet parents and staff can dial the same number to reach them in any classroom. They just log on to the Cisco Unified IP phone in their classroom at the beginning of the period to personalize it with their own phone number and preferences.

Enhanced Home-School Communications

IP telephony also helps parents stay in closer touch with the school, an important factor in students' academic success. In Cleveland County Public Schools, some 1000 teachers and staff use Cisco Unity voicemail to simplify communications with parents and administrators. Teachers see a list of messages right in their email inbox and can just click to listen to messages in any order. School secretaries gain time because they no longer have to take messages for teachers and send a messenger to a classroom.

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School set up hunt groups so that if a parent is unable to reach a particular person, the call is automatically routed to someone else with a similar job function. Having a human answer the phone is reassuring to parents. And when the school needs to inform parents about special events, such as a change in schedule, an administrator can use the Cisco Unity Voicemail system to send a broadcast message to all homes.

Support for District Safety Plans

IP telephony also helps schools prepare for and respond to emergency incidents. Simply having a phone in every classroom improves the school's security posture. At Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, teachers press one button on their classroom Cisco Unified IP phone to summon security personnel. Horizon Charter School of Lincoln, California, uses InformaCast software to send alerts to all sites through the phones' built-in speakers. And Davis School District, near Salt Lake City, Utah, uses SchoolMessenger for Cisco Unified Communications to automatically call the homes of absent elementary school students who aren't at school one hour after schools starts.

To read the Cristo Rey Jesuit High School case study, visit:

www.cisco.com/en/US/prod/collateral/voicesw/ps6788/vcallcon/ps556/case_study_c36-448874.pdf

To read the Saratoga Union School District case study, visit:

www.cisco.com/en/US/prod/collateral/voicesw/ps6788/vcallcon/ps4625/prod_case_study0900aecd8069ca42.pdf

To read the Cleveland County Public Schools case study, visit:

www.cisco.com/en/US/prod/collateral/voicesw/ps6788/vcallcon/ps556/case_study_c36-517179.pdf




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