Wayne Highlands School District

K–12 Education

Wayne Highlands School District
District Population: 20,870
Industry: K–12 Education
Location:
United States
Wayne County, Pennsylvania

Challenge
Wayne Highlands School District is located in Northeastern Pennsylvania in Wayne County in the Pocono Mountains. This region receives a significant amount of tourism, and many families in this rural environment rely on seasonal tourist activities for income. Wayne County borders both the New York state line and the Delaware River. At 465 square miles, the school district is approximately the size of a third of Rhode Island.

Due its size and its rural profile, many schools in Wayne Highlands require high-performing technology. However, getting fiber optics to rural areas has historically been a challenge for the school district. Wayne Highlands’ director of technology, Scott D. Miller, arrived at the school district in 2014 and made it his mission to redesign the district’s technical infrastructure and bring more technology to education.

“Two years ago the district had many goals we wanted to realize,” says Miller. “We wanted to implement a one-to-one learning environment, and we wanted to provide robust, reliable service to students who might not have a connection at home; however, our existing network was 10 years old, and could only support basic coverage.”

Collaborating with administrative and educational leaders, Miller put together a vision for a stronger, outcomes-oriented education technology environment from the ground-up. Wayne Highlands needed a new wireless network and began to look for a holistic solution that could simplify otherwise complex configuration changes and provide a unified management interface.

Solution
Planning a new classroom

The vision came to life when Miller and his colleagues discussed the district’s usage of E-rate funding. The first year after the E-rate program was modernized, Wayne Highlands was able to leverage Category Two funding for a new, comprehensive wireless environment. Since part of Wayne Highland’s vision was to become a “smart” school district with multiple touch points in the classroom, E-rate was the answer to bolstering this more technological environment.

“Our largest goal after kicking off our search was to give students and teachers cutting edge technology, no questions
Wayne Highlands School District...
was taking place. Cisco Meraki radios further enabled this process by taking bandwidth requirements and preventing any and all bottlenecks. On top of this new classroom functionality, Miller and his team deployed voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), eliminating the practice of long-distance calls and extra transport costs.

From an IT perspective, Miller and his team refocused on other priorities. Now, because access to the Internet is fast and reliable, most of the team’s time is spent discussing new learning applications and curriculum, and less consumed with network issues.

“While we’re thrilled with what our staff can do, the benefits extend way beyond our team,” says Miller. “Our new system allows us to call a home and touch base with a faculty member, staff member, or student’s family. The return on investment for children is just remarkable. Our students no longer have to plug in to the network. Now, they can be wireless instantly.”

Inside the classroom, learners at all grade levels have benefited from Wayne Highlands’ newly controlled network. Faculty have incorporated new, vigorous education technology curriculum into K–12 lessons and have added online videos, digital worksheets, and remote access to instructional content. With these new benefits, elementary learners can now trace letters and read stories remotely.

“Having a robust network, and knowing that everything connects, is priceless,” says Miller. “We don’t need manual interpretations or changes. The Cisco Meraki system is invisible, and that’s what makes us so excited.”

Next Steps
Next up for Wayne Highlands is an expansion of the school district’s one-to-one program, which is being fueled by the new network. In addition, during the 2016–2017 school year, Wayne Highlands will begin a large overhaul of its IP video surveillance system to ensure that students are always safe on campus.

“While we are making progress in new areas, like one-to-one learning and security, our primary focus is ensuring that our students have what they need to succeed,” says Miller. “We want to provide our students with everything that’s available in technology and curriculum, and allow them to make great decisions for their future, and ultimately, their career path.”

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Scott D. Miller
Director of Technology, Wayne Highlands School District

“The genius of a strong cloud-based dashboard is that you can troubleshoot with one click and move on, which is extremely powerful.”

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