



Long Island School District Deploys Enhanced Network Solution

Half Hollow Hills Central School District:

Size: Approximately 8618 students

Industry: K-12 Education

Location:

United States

New York

Solutions

- Deployed new network infrastructure to support the district
- Installed new wireless access points in classrooms

Challenge

Located 40 miles outside New York City, the Half Hollow Hills Central School District (CSD) on Long Island faces high expectations. Serving an education-centric community of more than 40,000 people, the district is committed to providing its more than 8000 K-12 students with the opportunity to excel at any endeavor—academics, athletics, and the arts. With oversight of five elementary schools, two middle schools and two high schools, the district’s long-term mission is to improve educational experiences for students and become a nationally recognized school district.

To achieve these goals, district administrators need to provide students and teachers with the resources and environment to enhance classroom experiences. This requires not only providing the basics such as desks, books and pencils, but also the right technologies. From elementary school to high school, today’s K-12 classrooms are incorporating technology to create more collaborative, interactive learning experiences for students of all ages.

Like many districts, a key issue Half Hollow Hills CSD faces is maintaining a strong and reliable network infrastructure to service its schools. The district also requires a strong network with the bandwidth to support an ever-growing technology-rich curriculum.

“We were at a crossroad: our technology environment needed a boost for web-based or media-intensive learning opportunities,” says Director of Technology Jolynn Sapia. “We want to see progress with the use of technology—streaming video for lessons and incorporated devices—but we needed added capabilities.”

A new network solution would not only address these issues but also help advance the district’s transition toward an innovative, technology-friendly learning environment. With that in mind, the district set out to improve its network infrastructure with a limited budget.

Solution

Having a suitable network was paramount to Half Hollow Hills’s mission to be a more progressive and innovative school district. This kind of environment encourages

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Director of Technology, Half
Hollow Hills Central School
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With Cisco, Half Hollow Hills CSD...



Managed online testing with increased bandwidth



Expanded wireless access in schools and classrooms to support BYOD initiatives



Supported districtwide goal of integrating technology with educational experiences

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student participation and engagement, creating more collaborative teaching and learning experiences. The district needed to identify the technologies that could make this environment a reality.

Prior to moving forward planning, district administrators performed extensive research about the available solution options. Understanding its budget limitations, a substantial amount of testing and configuring was done to determine how the district could maximize each dollar of their investment. The district used laptop carts to test the network needs for different locations in schools and even did some classroom testing with high school teachers specifically interested in using more technology for their lessons.

After a comprehensive evaluation, Half Hollow Hills chose to use Cisco technology through Core BTS, a Cisco Gold Certified Partner. A network infrastructure based on Cisco technology offered the district support for its short- and long-term technology goals by improving the strength, reliability, and accessibility of the network.

Adopting a phased approach, the deployment took place over the course of a year, beginning with the two high schools in 2013 and the middle and elementary schools in 2014. Phase two was split between two subsequent waves, focusing on the schools that required the most attention and then the work that deployed new access points was next and the facilities that required limited work done after that.

Half Hollow Hills purchased Cisco wireless technology to improve classroom connectivity and enhance network access to support each school in the district. These selections and implementations are already delivering benefits and helping facilitate better educational experiences.

Cisco and Core BTS collaborated to ensure the implementation was completed on time and within the district’s budget. A key component to the project’s success was the regular, clear communication among Cisco, Core BTS, and district officials. The deployment teams spent time walking Sapia and others through the deployment process, explaining everything that was being done and how it would ultimately provide the district with a stronger, more reliable network for students, teachers, and administrators.

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Results

With a Cisco network infrastructure in place, Half Hollow Hills CSD is benefiting from faster and more reliable connections in its schools. The increased bandwidth and strength of the network are enabling teachers and students to access video and other media-intensive content faster and easier than before. For teachers, this means more flexibility to be creative with planning and executing classroom activities. The new infrastructure has enhanced communication and information sharing capabilities for teachers and administrators.

Teachers are now using Google documents to plan and share ideas with each other. Teachers track students’ progress and share that information with colleagues through shared documents. With these improvements teachers now have a holistic view of how students are managing their workload and the technology facilitate a collaborative teaching approach to support students that are struggling in certain areas.

Similarly, district administrators use a web-based information management system called Infinite Campus, which tracks student attendance, behavior,

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grades, and health, and it contains relevant resources, such as course catalogs and graduation plans. The system even helps administrators prepare required reports submitted to the New York State Education Department. In both cases, the district’s new network is enhancing these activities through improved accessibility and reliability.

Additionally, Half Hollow Hills has greatly improved its wireless capabilities. With Cisco wireless technologies in place, the district is now well positioned to handle an expanded bring-your-own-device (BYOD) program. Prior to the implementation, teachers couldn’t access the network with personal mobile devices. Today, teachers are logging in to the network using iPads, laptops, and other mobile devices, making it easier for them to adjust lessons plans and access district resources.

The new environment is also facilitating opportunities for students. For instance, a new program distributed 80 iPads to high school seniors. With new wireless access points in place, students are using these devices in every building throughout the day to use textbooks, work on homework assignments, watch documentaries, and use other resources. This program, which would not have been possible under

the previous network, offers students an opportunity to fully experience and embrace mobile device capabilities.

Some of the program additions, facilitating new types of student learning, include iPad carts at each middle school. These carts help seventh and eighth grade social studies classes, in particular.

“Integration of technology and its use in the classroom aligns with today’s modern educational practices, fostering improvements in collaborative and individual learning,” says Sapia. “Having a strong, reliable network for students and teachers is critical to building a long-term technology strategy, and Cisco’s solution is helping us do that.”

Next Steps

Half Hollow Hills CSD is continuing to evaluate how it uses technology to improve learning. This includes making necessary enhancements to ensure its network is ready for future online testing. From a long-term perspective, the district aims to proactively identify its technology needs and embrace future opportunities to incorporate innovative technologies that meet the needs of teachers, students, and administrators.

Products and Services

Routing

- Cisco Catalyst 2960-S and 2960 Series Switches

Wireless

- Cisco (ISE) Integrated Services Engine

- Cisco WiSM (Wireless Control Module)

- Cisco Aironet 2600 CleanAir APs

Network Management

- Cisco Prime Infrastructure



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