

Ralston Public Schools Bringing next-generation services to the classroom

Introduction

Preparing students for the future is a priority for Ralston Public School District in Ralston, Nebraska. It is among the leading districts in the state and was the first district in Nebraska to implement higher graduation requirements and standards. Though the district provides a rigorous curriculum, Ralston Public Schools did not have a communication system that could meet its needs. So the district turned to Windstream to move its technology forward.

Background

Ralston Public Schools has approximately 3,100 students in six elementary schools, one middle school, and one senior high school. The district has more than 1,300 computers that students and administrators use in the classroom, or to do research. Computer labs and classroom computing with Internet access is available at each elementary school and at Ralston Middle School. Ralston High School students have the opportunity to use technology in all curriculum areas including the graphic arts program, CAD, WEB design, programming classes, marketing, and the paperless English classroom.

Solutions

Although the district places an emphasis on technology in the classroom, Ralston Public Schools still needed to upgrade its communication systems. The district had four separate telephone systems that were not integrated into a comprehensive key system. In 2007, Windstream installed a Nortel CS1000/BCM50 network to provide the district with four-digit dialing, centralized trunking and voicemail. Windstream also was able to work with FirstClass to provide virtual voicemail for every teacher so that a parent can dial in and leave a message that goes directly into the teacher's e-mail, eliminating the need for individual phones in each classroom.

In 2008, the district had a need for additional data bandwidth, and the local cable company would have had to install fiber connections to each school to provide the service. Windstream was able to solve the problem in an affordable way with its ConnectStream Virtual LAN Solution (VLS). The product offers a highly reliable, flexible way to connect several business locations—in this case, schools—

virtually over fiber, or copper-based Ethernet connections. Windstream was able to build one fiber connection to Ralston High School, providing the school with 65 Mbps of Internet, and then use Ethernet connections to extend 3 Mbps to 18 Mbps in nine other school district locations.

“The communication that we’ve had working with Windstream has been great,” said Michael Burns, Instructional Data Director for Ralston Public Schools. “With Windstream it’s all about solutions. They have local sales representatives and customer service technicians in our district, and what makes it nice is that I can stop by the local Windstream office and meet with them and talk about a solution. It’s a genuine company with great values.”

Results

As a result of switching to Windstream, Ralston Public Schools has been able to significantly increase Internet speeds to its eight schools and administrative locations. By using advanced technology and existing copper-based connections, Windstream was able to provide an affordable, seamless solution to the district.

In addition, the district has enjoyed a close working relationship with local Windstream representatives who have been able to respond to issues within minutes. Burns said he has Windstream representatives' personal cell phone numbers on hand and added that the company provides superior customer service.

“People have the expectation that networks and phone systems just work. And that’s what we’ve seen—Windstream makes it work,” he said. “They’re always there when we have to call, and that personal service is what makes our relationship a success.”

If you are interested in implementing similar technologies, please call Windstream at 1-888-673-WIND (9463), or speak to your current Windstream account manager to learn more.