

Inter-Tel

Case Study: St. Louis School District



Making schools safe—integrating communications systems across facilities

In the spring of 2000, when Bill Koulouriotis, director of technology with Webster Groves School District in St. Louis, MO, needed to upgrade the district's telecommunications system, a security solution was one of the priorities in choosing a new system. According to Koulouriotis, the district's old telecommunications situation was "pretty bleak." The high school and the central office were the only buildings with voice mail capability, and the district's other eight school buildings had only four or five phones in each building. There were no phones in any of the classrooms — a major security concern. In addition, some of the schools didn't have an intercom system. Which meant either someone would have to take a hand-written message and place it in a teacher's mailbox; or someone would have to physically go to the classroom to deliver the message.

More than just a phone system—a return on investment

When Koulouriotis put the upgrade job to bid, he received a couple proposals for separate phone and intercom systems. When Susan Murphy, salesperson for Inter-Tel's St. Louis branch, recommended a fully integrated telephone, paging, intercom, bell, horn and clock system, Koulouriotis was interested.

Based upon previous installations at two other St. Louis school districts, Murphy knew an Inter-Tel solution would save the Webster Groves School District money. "We just priced out the entire network and did a return on investment (ROI) cost comparison," says Murphy.

The school district was paying \$5,225.25 per month for local dial tone and data connections. By installing an Inter-Tel Axxess transparent network, replacing all Plexar lines with three PRI/ISDN T-1s, and providing 900 DID numbers with Caller I.D., the school district would have more bandwidth and voice connectivity for only \$2,849 per month.





The Inter-Tel Solution

The installation package included: Four 128-port chassis, two 256-port chassis and two 512-port chassis transparently networked together from multiple locations through Inter-Tel's distributed architecture. Murphy also suggested installing a School Bell and Page application and an ATS Clock Controller program, along with new wall clocks, speakers and horns. "It's a complete package — more than just a phone system," says Koulouriotis. "It was everything integrated into one." In addition, money allocated in the school district's budget for different systems could be pooled together.

The School Bell and Page application, installed at each school, allows for live or pre-recorded messages to play over the password-protected paging system. With this adaptable system, different bell sounds can be played at different times during the school schedule.

Why Inter-Tel

By upgrading the system and improving communications, Koulouriotis says the district has received a couple benefits. Parents have praised the fact that they can communicate easily with the teachers now. Parents like being able to call the teachers directly. Calls can be placed or received during a teacher's free time, or parents can leave a message in the teacher's voice mailbox, allowing the call to be returned at a convenient time.

During an emergency, a teacher can press a button on the classroom phone opening up a two-way link to designated security checkpoints, such as the principal, counselor and/or district security offices. The system alerts designated personnel of the emergency location and enables them, through the intercom, to assess what is going on in the classroom, so they can respond accordingly.

Since the district system is networked together, Expanded 911, which is becoming mandatory in more cities, is also an available feature. During an emergency, anyone can pick up a phone and dial 911. The system allows the Public Service Answering Point to identify the individual school and the emergency location, so emergency personnel can be directed to the right place.

Overall, teachers, administrators, staff, parents and students at Webster Groves School District are pleased with the new Inter-Tel integrated communications system. "Inter-Tel provided a system that did everything that we wanted it to," says Koulouriotis. "It wasn't the cheapest, but it was the most cost effective."



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