

DECATUR COUNTY SCHOOLS CREATE FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING USING ALCATEL-LUCENT INFRASTRUCTURE

BROAD SELECTION OF ALCATEL-LUCENT SOLUTIONS DEPLOYED TO PROVIDE ROBUST INFRASTRUCTURE FOR NEW SCHOOL PREMISES AND RETROFIT OF EXISTING BUILDINGS



CASE STUDY

MARKET: **EDUCATION**

REGION: **NORTH AMERICA**



Located in southern Georgia, Decatur County Schools is comprised of five elementary, two middle and one high school. Responsibility for providing quality education to over 5,600 students falls to the 400 staff and faculty members. A critical need to enable new and existing facilities to benefit from technology-driven advances in education, coupled with extremely tight budgets, placed great importance on selecting the right networking solutions partner.

CHALLENGES

- Requirement to create future-proof infrastructure with finite financial resources and a fully utilized small support team
- Reliability and uptime critical to satisfy staff expectations
- Vision to transform technology into a learning enabler

SOLUTIONS

- Alcatel-Lucent OmniSwitch™ 9800 and 6850 LAN Switches
- Alcatel-Lucent OmniAccess™ AP105 wireless access points and associated wireless controllers
- Alcatel-Lucent 8 Series IP Touch phones, including models 4018, 4028 and 4068
- Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX™ Enterprise Communications Server

BENEFITS

- Alcatel-Lucent's modular architecture allows for flexible and scalable voice, data and video infrastructure, without the fear of obsolescence or irrelevance and enables incremental growth and investment
- Hosting by City of Thomasville removes direct cost and labor associated with maintenance and support
- Alcatel-Lucent account team's tangible commitment to make the schools successful brings confidence to all purchase and strategy decisions

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Enterprise



DECATUR COUNTY SCHOOLS TURN TO ALCATEL-LUCENT TO CREATE A TRUSTED PARTNERSHIP THAT HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON ALL ASPECTS OF THE DAILY EDUCATION ROUTINE

“WHAT I REALLY LIKED WAS THAT ALCATEL-LUCENT’S USE OF OPEN, NON-PROPRIETARY TECHNOLOGIES REMOVES THE WORRY ABOUT CHANGES OCCURRING IN A FEW YEARS THAT NECESSITATE JUNKING EVERYTHING YOU JUST BOUGHT. PROTECTING OUR INVESTMENTS AND GETTING MAXIMUM VALUE OUT OF EVERYTHING WE BUY IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO THE DISTRICT.”

Steve Dunn, Decatur County Schools Director of Technology

THE CHALLENGES

Steve Dunn, Decatur County Schools Director of Technology, comments on the challenges he was facing, “As with any school district, the challenge of creating a positive learning environment for students demands continual focus and attention to detail. We don’t have infinite resources, so my decisions have to make sense from both short- and long-term perspectives. Everything we do must contribute to the creation of a solid foundation to support the process of education.”

Dunn’s tenure with the Decatur County Schools coincided with the start of construction for a new high school. Despite already having accepted a bid for the school’s network infrastructure, there were sufficient concerns for the then superintendent to give permission to redo the contract.

“Apart from what I felt to be an over-inflated price,” recalls Dunn, “my biggest issue was that I wasn’t sure that we would even end up with a fully operational network! I did a lot of research and got many strong recommendations for Alcatel-Lucent equipment. One key factor for me was the number of hospital deployments; high-availability is important to Decatur but for a medical facility it can literally be the difference between life and death.

“What I really like is Alcatel-Lucent’s use of open, non-proprietary technologies removes the worry about changes occurring in a few years that necessitate junking everything you just bought. Protecting our investments and getting maximum value out of everything we buy is really important to the district.”

THE SOLUTION

Dunn selected a combination of Alcatel-Lucent OmniSwitch™ 9800 and OmniSwitch™ 6850 stackable LAN switch models. These were complemented by multiple Alcatel-Lucent OmniAccess™ AP105 wireless access points and wireless controllers. Handsets were selected from the Alcatel-Lucent 8 Series IP Touch phone range – including models 4018, 4028 and 4068 – connected to an Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX™ Enterprise Communications Server.

A noteworthy example of Dunn’s innovative thinking, driven by necessity, is reflected in the partnership enjoyed with the nearby City of Thomasville. After agreeing to a monthly fee paid by the school district, the equipment was purchased by the city and key components, such as the OmniPCX™ Enterprise Communications Server, hosted in a local hardened facility. The city uses previously unallocated capacity in its data center and excess support resources to host the service, in what is the first example of this type of arrangement in the USA.

Dunn notes, “I have control over the models deployed and have full administrative capability to do things like add users. Having a hosted solution means that we don’t own the equipment and therefore avoid any maintenance or service responsibilities. This allows us to stretch our budget and resources even further, and it enables the city to optimize its use of assets while making a contribution to the success of our school district. It’s a great arrangement where we all win.”

An additional incentive came from the Federal Universal Service Schools and Libraries Program that provides discounts to assist most schools and libraries in the United States to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access. Commonly known as “E-Rate”, the FCC-directed program provides subsidiaries of up to 90 percent to eligible schools and libraries from a \$2.25 billion pool of funds.

By carefully coordinating the specific nature of services it would purchase from the city, the Decatur project was able to qualify as a “Telecommunications and Internet Access services” initiative, giving it “Priority 1” E-Rate status and allowing it to receive funding ahead of other less critical requests.

THE BENEFITS

The positive impact of technology in education is becoming increasingly dramatic. Advances in disciplines such as distance learning, online tutorials, computer-enhanced curricula and the facilitation of fundamental communication have all contributed to the process of learning. However, the rapid pace of technology-fuelled progress brings its own challenges. Dunn explains, “It’s clear that technology is allowing us to achieve things we never could have done in the past, but designing an infrastructure today that is capable of accommodating the innovations of tomorrow can be an almost impossible task.

This makes it imperative to build a foundation that has the flexibility to accommodate future demands that we really can’t fully anticipate today. The modular approach of the Alcatel-Lucent equipment gives us the ability to adjust. This also means that we don’t need to buy everything at once; if we don’t have the necessary budget, we can still get immediate benefit by implementing a more modest configuration and then adding to it over time.”

Empowering staff with Alcatel-Lucent technology

One of Decatur’s goals is to ultimately have a phone on the desk of every teacher. At a recently opened high school, teachers were each given handsets from the Alcatel-Lucent 8 Series IP Touch phone range in their classrooms. Dunn recalled a recent exchange, “After installing the system a teacher sent an email thanking me for the phone and for removing the hassle of having to find a free phone in the faculty lounge. More

CUSTOMER SUMMARY

Customer Name: Decatur County Schools

URL: www.boe.dcboe.com

Industry: Education

Number of staff: 400

Number of students: 5,600

Decatur County Schools

OUR Vision

Excellence, Engagement and Accountability.....for All.

OUR Mission

To empower all students to engage and succeed in a global society by providing rigorous and equitable opportunities, nurturing environments, sustained partnerships, college and career readiness and character development.

“THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DECATUR AND ALCATEL-LUCENT IS A TRUE PARTNERSHIP AND I SINCERELY FEEL THAT IT HAS MY BEST INTERESTS AT HEART, NOT JUST TODAY, BUT TOMORROW AND THE NEXT DAY.”

Steve Dunn, Decatur County Schools Director of Technology

importantly, the teachers are now empowered to talk confidentially to parents from the privacy of their own classroom with immediate access to all the information relevant to the conversation at their fingertips.”

He continued, “We also allow the teachers to use the phone for other important calls that may not be strictly related to school activities, such as scheduling a doctor’s appointment. It’s a small thing, but showing our teachers that we value them is very important to us.”

Reliability and ease of management are two extremely important factors for Decatur County Schools. With 3,300 computers spread across the network, each with six or seven attached devices, the loading on the technical support staff is significant.

“There are really only two people in our technical team that have the expertise to manage the network; that’s why it’s critical that when we implement something it just has to work,” describes Dunn. “I don’t have the luxury of continually troubleshooting faulty equipment, and I certainly don’t want to have to go back to my superintendent to apologize for putting in equipment that isn’t performing.

“Our faculty doesn’t have the patience to hear that the network or phone system is down; they justifiably expect it to work all the time. Ever since it was installed, our Alcatel-Lucent infrastructure hasn’t missed a beat: We have experienced zero downtime.”

NEXT STEPS

Dunn concludes, “Alcatel-Lucent delivers everything I need – reliability, performance, innovation, scalability, flexibility – but beyond all of these, what impresses me most is the sense that the whole company is committed to making sure I am successful.

“The relationship between Decatur and Alcatel-Lucent is a true partnership and I sincerely feel that it has my best interests at heart, not just today, but tomorrow and the next day.”

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