



Ambridge Area School District

“They provided us with a voice and data solution that is carrier grade. Once the equipment is installed, it runs without attention and is always available.”

*Jim LaSalle,
Technology Director,
Ambridge Area School
District*

Ambridge Area School District is dedicated to providing the best possible educational programs and facilities for the students and community that it serves.

The town of Ambridge, an old steel mill township, sits on the Ohio River northeast of Pittsburgh in Beaver County, Pennsylvania. The school district consists of a high school, a junior high, four elementary schools, one parochial school and a public library.

THE CHALLENGE

In 2001, Ambridge Area School District was confronted with a growing district and changing applications that its network couldn't support. Ambridge began a search for a single vendor that could provide a standards-based solution for voice and data communications.

THE SOLUTION

After evaluating several vendors, the District selected Alcatel. With the help of Alcatel's channel partner Communications Consultants, Inc. (<http://cci-fcsi.com>), Ambridge Area Schools now has a network infrastructure built on Alcatel's convergence solutions.

Core switching and routing are performed on Alcatel OmniSwitch 7000 series switches, supporting the district's private Gigabit Ethernet MAN that

extends over 27 square miles. The network's OmniSwitch 7000 series of data infrastructure switches are designed for the network edge and core. These standards-based switches extend carrier-class availability throughout the network to provide the ideal multiservice infrastructure for IP telephony and mission critical applications.

All of the school buildings in the district have Alcatel network infrastructure switches attached to the MAN, including two Omni Switch/Routers and over 40 OmniStack 4024, 5024, and 6124 switches at the network edge.

OmniAccess 512s are used for multiple T1 Internet access to the district and backup T1/frame relay services between the high school and Economy Elementary/Middle School campus.

The district's voice network is made up of four Alcatel OmniPCX 4400s, supporting five of the seven buildings in the district. Also incorporated are over 50 Alcatel digital Reflexes telephones, which are available as entry level to advanced devices. With an IP adapter, these telephones provide a cost effective migration path to IP telephony.



Jim LaSalle, technology director for Ambridge Area School District explains, "Our phone system was outdated, and it was no longer reliable. With Alcatel, we have a future proof voice system."

WHY ALCATEL?

LaSalle lists many reasons for choosing Alcatel. "Alcatel never made us feel like we were just a school. The amount of attention and technical expertise that came ourway was phenomenal. Even if we had minor issues, Alcatel performed above ourexpectations."

What advice would he give to someone who wants to improve their voice and data network? LaSalle says, "You could do no better than Alcatel. They are definitely a tier one player in hardware, implementation, and support."

THE RESULTS

The Alcatel OmniSwitch and OmniStack products have enabled Ambridge Area School District to accommodate its growing student population. The new data network supports 500 users, providing additional network access in classrooms and labs. New administrative applications such as online time and attendance, grades, and student records are easily accessed and updated thanks to the additional bandwidth the products provide.

The OmniPCX 4400 has enabled the district to put a phone in every classroom, improving employees' mobility. LaSalle says, "Phone features such as auto-attendant, call accounting, and police call routing are important to us. Another key feature are the mobility. Our staff moves around a lot, and with the Alcatel Reflexes telephones, the process of moving people is simple and efficient. LaSalle is confident that the OmniPCX 4400 will take them into the future at a pace the district is comfortable with.

FUTURE PLANS

In addition to configuring VLANs to segment its network traffic, Ambridge Area School District plans to implement a homework hotline, explore distance-learning applications, and eventually provide parents with online access to student records.

As new school buildings are contemplated, LaSalle says, "There is a sense of comfort in knowing that as the district grows, I don't have to run out and buy another box. I know that the voice and data communication solutions from Alcatel will take us where we want to go."

"As a school, we're never going to scratch the surface of all the capabilities that we have with this product. But it's nice to know that we'll be ready for whatever comes down the road."

*Jim LaSalle,
Technology Director,
Ambridge Area
School District*

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