

Del Norte County Unified School District

Replaces the Old and Ushers in a New Way to Communicate

The Challenge

Chris York, IT Director at Del Norte County Unified School District (DNUSD), began his network refresh with one major business objective: to build a foundation that would allow effective internal and external communication. He and his team were constantly challenged by the district's disparate systems that didn't connect well. Daily operations required all hands on deck and included the entire (lean) IT department and various maintenance workers.



With York, one network administrator, and two technicians, the district's electrician had to travel to all 13 schools (which span approximately 40 miles in three directions), to address issues on site. Any adjustments to phones, bells, or PA Systems had to be done manually, which meant a trip to the site for maintenance staff.

Aging systems (including an analog phone system from the 80s) and a small IT team servicing such a geographically large area eventually required the district to consider a network upgrade. Subsequently, York and IT were "given the opportunity to replace a failing network that was held together by bubble gum and baling wire with modern equipment."

No Band-Aid Solutions

After the business objectives were carefully determined and documented, DGI, Cisco, and the stakeholders at DNUSD collectively developed a plan. The refresh started with the rewiring of 12 out of the 13 schools. Some sites are small, while some are large (the high school has had as many as 1400 students), so this was no small feat. There were timing issues and other challenges, but DGI installed the new, pre-configured devices as the wiring was completed and had the new network running parallel to the old network. When wiring was completed at every site, all new devices were brought up, and DNUSD moved to their new network "basically over a weekend," according to York.

The holistic solution is a completely integrated network infrastructure that includes a VoIP system with phones across all sites, a wireless controller with hundreds of access points, fully integrated clocks, bells, and paging, and a new route/switch infrastructure serving as the foundation.

“We moved from the old network, which was running parallel to the new network, basically over a weekend.”

The Result

DGI successfully helped York, his team, and the district's stakeholders develop a solution that leverages their technology in a way that has significantly more impact on the district's communication within the community. The district's parents and administrators are ecstatic that communication with their schools is better. The technologies chosen to meet the district's objectives also give IT the ability to troubleshoot more quickly without being required to drive to the location, and maintenance staff can now proactively address the issues they were actually hired to manage. The positive effects on the conservation of time and financial resources within the district are innumerable.