



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Shared Resources Improve Access for 86,000 Students in Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 Schools

Industry

Education

Customer use

- Distance learning
- “Flipped classroom” instruction
- Administrative meetings
- Virtual field trips
- Training and professional development

Polycom® RealPresence® solutions

- High-definition room environments in 22 public school districts and private schools
- Universal collaboration, integrated with Microsoft® Lync®, for on-demand distance learning, video meetings, and events
- Recording and streaming solutions for capturing and delivering classes and professional development content
- Desktop and mobile software for mobile education

Benefits

- Public school districts, facing ever-increasing funding cuts, are able to share a single resource across multiple school buildings
- Teachers and staff save time and resources previously spent driving to attend meetings and trainings
- Students can virtually tour museums and landmarks at little or no cost to schools and take advance or specialized classes from their home school
- Teachers can easily implement “flipped classroom,” remote teaching, and other instructional modes
- Parents can remotely attend graduations and other events via streaming video

Overview

For the 22 public school districts in Pennsylvania’s Lancaster and Lebanon counties—and for students in nonpublic schools, preschoolers, and adult learners throughout the state—Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (IU 13) is a lifeline. The organization provides essential resources many districts simply can’t afford on their own. Every year, more than 86,000 students see their educational experience improve thanks to the shared resources provided by IU 13.

Since 2008, those improvements have come from new ways of teaching and working, such as distance-learning and professional development, “flipped classroom” instruction, virtual field trips, administrative meetings, and more. All of these are enabled by a unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) environment provided by Polycom® RealPresence® solutions and Microsoft® Lync®.

By replacing in-person classes and meetings with face-to-face video, districts have saved thousands of hours in travel-time, achieved cost efficiencies, and increased productivity levels, all of which would have been impossible without a shared network.

Making the most of perennially tight budgets

The harsh calculus of public school financing regularly imposes tough choices on school districts, where administrators must weigh escalating needs against shrinking resources. Students at several high schools may request the chance to learn Mandarin Chinese, but few districts can afford to hire teachers in every school where there is interest. The result? Students go without.

Enter Lancaster-Lebanon IU 13 and its UC&C environment. Thanks to IU 13’s ability to provide a shared resource—in this case a video collaboration network allowing a specially trained language teacher to serve multiple schools—Mandarin Chinese is now offered at not just one school district, but four. Instruction is face-to-face and fully interactive, as if the teacher was in the room with students.

“We provide the infrastructure,” says Roy Hoover, wide area network services coordinator for IU 13. “The schools decide when and how they want to use the service. Some schools have been very entrepreneurial in their approach.”

An on-ramp for students, faculty and staff

Students, faculty, and staff in the schools and administrative offices throughout Lancaster and Lebanon counties access the network from any of IU 13’s 90 video

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Roy Hoover, Wide Area Network Services Coordinator, Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13

collaboration environments. The network serves as an on-ramp for an array of services including:

- **“Flipped classroom” instruction**—In a reversal of traditional teaching modes, instructors at many schools use the Polycom infrastructure to make high-quality recordings of lectures and then have students watch them at home. Class time is then spent completing “homework” and hands-on activities.
- **Remote teaching**—Educators with deep knowledge of specific topics, such as Civil War battles or life in Soviet Russia, can virtually join classes via face-to-face video collaboration. “We serve one district with fewer than 1,500 students and only three buildings,” says Hoover. “To them, having access to outside experts is especially helpful.”
- **Specialized classes**—Students in middle schools no longer need to travel to high schools to take advanced placement math classes or other specialized curriculum, which reduces the associated transportation costs. “Without the service, these students would have to travel by bus to the high school for one period,” says Hoover. “Now they can participate from their own schools over video.”
- **Virtual field trips**—Schools save money and keep students on campus by participating in virtual field trips to museums, national monuments, libraries, and universities. Schools also take advantage of free or low-cost programs found on Polycom’s Videoconference Content Provider Database and on CAPspace, a portal for video collaboration opportunities for educators worldwide.
- **Events**—Schools frequently want special events streamed live or archived for later viewing. Lancaster Mennonite School, one of the private schools using IU 13’s infrastructure, recently streamed its high school graduation so the families of international students could attend remotely.
- **Administrative meetings**—“Frequently, staff members remotely attend meetings from their home school, which saves the school time and resources,” says Hoover.
- **Professional development and training**—Use of the network for teacher and staff training is constant. “The benefit of these systems goes beyond the dollars,” explains Hoover. “By using video and streaming systems, teachers from all over the state are able to participate in these trainings, collaborate with other teachers, and extend the knowledge gained to their students—without accruing large travel fees. This is a benefit to the schools, the teachers, and most importantly, the students.”

Implementing a self-serve model

Users find Polycom environments easy to operate, says Hoover, because calls can be dialed directly without prior scheduling or assistance from Hoover’s team. It’s part of Hoover’s vision for self-serve collaboration, which has him exploring a more widespread use of Polycom® RealPresence® Mobile software on iPads for staff and students.

Integration with Microsoft Lync also helps cultivate user adoption. “The reason I began looking at Lync was because of its transparent interoperability with Polycom RealPresence. Now Lync is a big part of how we’re collaborating. Teachers and staff can connect regardless of their device or environment.”

Hoover even foresees the broader availability of video driving the evolution of education itself: “Much of instruction today is a student sitting in a classroom. But when you add mobility, a classroom can be anywhere.”

About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in open standards-based unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) solutions for voice and video collaboration, trusted by more than 415,000 customers around the world. Polycom solutions are powered by the Polycom® RealPresence® Platform, comprehensive software infrastructure and rich APIs that interoperate with the broadest set of communication, business, mobile and cloud applications and devices to deliver secure face-to-face video collaboration in any environment.

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