

Central Catholic High School

Logicalis unleashes learning at Central Catholic High

Three years after Central Catholic High School in Toledo, Ohio, began equipping all 1,070 of its students and 120 faculty and staff with notebook computers, more than three-quarters of them were using the mobile devices to facilitate learning, collaboration and professional development.

However, because the school's older wireless network had been built from consumer grade wireless equipment, performance was slow and unreliable. Coverage was so spotty that students had resorted to sitting in hallways to get a wireless signal, says Chris Hamady, the school's director of technology.

All that changed after Logicalis stepped in, analyzed the school's needs, and designed and deployed an upgraded HPE wired and wireless network infrastructure. "Today, students can reliably connect to the wireless network in their classrooms," says Hamady. "That creates a more functional learning environment than forcing them out into the hall for a signal."

Mobile Internet access is a necessity at Central Catholic, which prides itself on a 90-year tradition of excellence culminating in early 2009 with it being the first high school in Northwest Ohio and the first Catholic high school in the state to be named an International Baccalaureate World School. But once the number of notebooks reached about 850, users began reporting problems such as slow performance, dropped connections and an inability to link to the network at all.

On the recommendation of a consultant who manages a wireless network in a nearby state university, Hamady contacted HPE to see if it could help. HPE referred him to Logicalis. After a detailed design study and proof of concept, Logicalis replaced the existing network with wired Gigabit Ethernet technology, and replaced the existing wireless access points to provide adequate bandwidth for the nearly 1,200 mobile computers in use.

While many business partners could have performed the upgrade, Logicalis went above and beyond. Hamady has special praise for Logicalis Account Executive Rick Sturgis. "Whenever I ask Rick for anything, he makes it happen," says Hamady. "He ranks up there as one of the best partners I've worked with. For example, we had a little bit of an issue with the wireless network early on. We gave Rick a call, and very soon afterwards, he put us in touch with some people at HPE who had us download a firmware update to the access points, and that straightened out the issue."

Logicalis can get faster and higher levels of technical support than other professional services firms because of its close, ongoing relationship with HPE, which includes its status as an HPE Solution Elite Partner, having a national focus on HPE networking and "working with the HPE team on a daily basis," says Sturgis. "Several times we had an HPE technical center dial in and do a Webinar, taking control of the school's environment and showing them how to monitor and manage certain network characteristics for performance."

Sturgis also called on the expertise of Logicalis experts who provide services to K-12 schools across the country, to help his team understand the unique needs of a school such as Central Catholic. Logicalis also provided equipment for a 90-day proof of concept, an unusual step for a relatively small customer such as a high school.

While Hamady had also considered another wireless vendor, the solution provided by HPE and Logicalis was much more affordable. Another big plus was the free lifetime warranty on HPE switched and wireless equipment, a feature other vendors charge for.

The new equipment was deployed over the 2010 summer break, in what Hamady calls a "flawless" on-time and on-budget performance by Logicalis. The difference was immediately obvious. So far, the equipment has worked "flawlessly," and the school plans to deploy more HPE wireless access points to further improve network performance, says Hamady.

Another benefit of the HPE solution is ease of management. "Previously, we had to make a change to each and every access point manually," says Hamady. "Now, all the management is done at a centralized console. So we can change the settings on the console, and it gets pushed out to all the access points."

Logicalis not only delivered on the wireless infrastructure, but agreed to sponsor the annual Creativity and Technology Integration in Innovative Education Conference Central Catholic hosts each year. The conference, which will showcase creative uses of technology in learning, will aid teacher's professional development by bringing the best and latest thinking in the use of educational technology to the school.

"What better way to provide professional development than to create a conference?" he says. "People submit presentations on, for example, how to use video to illustrate how gravity is not affected by the shape of an object. It's a real-world implementation of technology in the curriculum. Without a solid wired and wireless network, none of these things could happen."

And that network infrastructure wouldn't be as fast and reliable without the high-quality and cost-effective equipment provided by HPE and the expertise of Logicalis. "From a value standpoint, I can't say enough about the HPE product that Logicalis sells and supports," says Hamady. "Logicalis has not only provided an immediate solution to the wireless access challenges we were facing, but we have formed a long-term relationship that supports our educational mission."

Situation

Central Catholic High School is a 90-year-old private high school in Toledo, Ohio. The school needed to upgrade its wireless infrastructure to improve the speed, availability and reliability of Web access as it provided mobile computers to all 1,070 students and 120 faculty and staff. Central Catholic High needed a partner who could provide not only high-quality products and services, but understand the unique budget and other needs of a private high school.

Solution

Logicalis leveraged its in-depth knowledge of the K-12 school market to conduct a detailed needs assessment of the school's needs, and provided a proof of concept to assure the solution met the needs of students, faculty and staff. It also forged a relationship beyond the sale by sponsoring a conference at Central Catholic High that highlighted innovative uses of technology in teaching.

Tech Specs

Technology and services provided by Logicalis to Central Catholic High School included:

- Pre-sales for proof-of-concept testing
- Pre-sales for configuration/on-site support Data center services for LAN switch and MSM 422 hardware installation
- Two HPE 4204 core switches
- Ten HPE 2520G 48-port LAN switches
- Ten HPE 2510G 8-port POE LAN switches
- Two HPE MSM 760 wireless controllers
- 40 HPE MSM 422 wireless access ports

“ Logicalis has not only provided an immediate solution to the wireless access challenges we were facing, but we have formed a long-term relationship that supports our educational mission. ”

Chris Hamady, Director of Technology, Central Catholic High School