



Tangible project benefits come with a network and voice-processing software platform on which the District can add functionality and integrate seamlessly with other systems, all with 55% year-over-year savings on telecom bills. The district now leverages the latest in communications technology software to support their learning and administrative environment with features and functions fine-tuned for each user work group.

Future Promise

By implementing a Cisco Unified Communications platform, with the underlying technologies to support power over Ethernet and robust quality of service, White Plains City Schools has positioned themselves for growth and scalability in a way that no traditional phone system could enable. For example, they now have the flexibility to deploy any of a large number of standards-based applications that enhance the education process, allow the district's employees to collaborate better and work more efficiently, and migrate off older platforms for many essential school systems, as they see the need and as their budget allows. The Cisco Unified Communications platform they've built positions them for much more interactive, efficient, cost-effective ways of meeting their student, administrative and business needs.

Project Partners

Annese & Associates, Inc.



Founded in 1970, Annese is transforming business with network communications solutions. We believe that your communications network is the engine that connects your people and their ideas to one another... and to your business.

At Annese, we take a personal approach to developing a voice, video and data network that meets your unique goals. This approach includes: Preparation, Planning, Design, Implementation, Operation/Maintenance, and Optimization. See the difference with Annese—800-723-2213.

The Lower Hudson Regional Information Center (LHRIC)



The Lower Hudson Regional Information Center a nonprofit consortium providing educational and administrative technology services to 62 school districts in Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland counties. It is one of 12 Regional Information Centers in New York that are part of the BOCES system. It provides a comprehensive menu of services, from technical services and support and financial and student information systems, to staff development, planning, and project management.

Always on the cutting edge, the LHRIC is primarily focused on assisting districts in transforming teaching and learning through the use of technology.

White Plains City School District



The mission of the White Plains City School District is to educate and inspire all students, while nurturing their dreams, so they learn continually, think critically, pursue their aspirations and contribute to a diverse and dynamic world. White Plains instills morals and core values in the students, faculty, and community:

- All people have intrinsic value.
- Celebrating and embracing diversity enrich life.
- All people can learn, grow and contribute.
- Every choice matters, and that people are responsible for their choices.
- Respect, honesty and trust empower.
- When people serve the community, both the individuals and the community benefit.
- High expectations promote high achievement.

Value, Functionality, and Business Success with Unified Communications

White Plains City School District

Overview

White Plains City School District found value, functionality and business success through careful planning and implementation of a district-wide Unified Communications System. The District's approach was through partnership with Southern Westchester BOCES / Lower Hudson Regional Information Center (LHRIC) and local Cisco technology integrator, Annese & Associates, Inc.

Road to Success

The road to success began four years ago, when the district administration began planning ahead for the next cycle of their voice communication systems. At that time, White Plains was in contract for a carrier provided dial tone solution for voice, with a 1980's vintage traditional PBX system serving the phones within their 11 buildings. As newer technology became available and evident in the market, the District realized that the phone system they had in place was too expensive to maintain, very limited in features/functions and unreliable, with an endless, daily list of end user problems and complaints. Moreover, they realized that they were paying too much for their local dial tone access.

Thorough research of available alternatives led the District's team towards a business and technical review of voice over IP (VoIP) technology, as the core function in Unified Communications. So began the process of assessment and planning for a major

communications technology overhaul for all of the district's facilities.

White Plains City School District's approach to this process was to seek broad and extensive input from experts in the field of communications technology. They engaged their peers among other school districts to gathered as much information as possible on voice upgrade alternatives within the K-12 education space.

They also looked inside their own district by engaging school board members,



Business Success

Fifty-five percent year-over-year savings on telecom bills and a substantial reduction in the annual cost of system "moves, adds, and changes."

Mission Success

The end result provides a network and voice processing software platform on which the District can add functionality and integrate seamlessly with other systems and educational priorities, mapping closely to the District's overarching mission and values.

Project Success

Completed on time, on budget, as planned.

Technical Success

The district now leverages the latest in communications technology software to support their learning and administrative environment with features and functions fine-tuned for each workgroup. Moreover, the district's entire communication system now operates seamlessly as a single entity across all facilities, with a unified dial plan, fully sharing all inbound and outbound dial tone access resources across all buildings.



administrators and teachers in an effort to make the process collaborative and open. George Brady of the LHRIC stated that "The planning process from the inception was really a collaboration from all parties and started with review of industry implementations of VoIP, and research into how other K-12 districts implemented [Unified Communications]." Assistant Superintendent for Finance Fred Seiler became aware of the project in July 2006, even before joining the District's administration team. It didn't take long for Fred to realize that the project team had already developed a strong financial plan with substantial business and technical benefits. In a recent interview, Mr. Seiler stated: "It was important that, not only had we put together a good financial plan, but put together a good working relationship so that it could be successfully implemented in a timely manner."

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—Lucy Roman**

Emphasis on Assessment, Planning and Design

The District's approach was cautious and thorough, with the primary emphasis on the assessment, planning, and design. According to District Coordinator of Administrative and Instructional Technology Lucy Roman, "The preplanning that was done really identified all of the details of how we should move forward and really made a difference in the success of the project."



All four organizations including BOCES, White Plains, Annese, and the manufacturer, Cisco Systems, collectively identified all the details that needed to be addressed as we went along and developed a comprehensive plan that proved to be successful."

Moreover, Ms. Roman pointed out the importance of the training and professional development plan that was built into the project in the planning and design phase. She stated, "A big component with whatever we do is providing adequate professional development when it comes to technology. This was included and looked at all the

way through. The necessary professional development was provided and planned out to the level of local support and training where necessary. That was a big component for me, and was aligned with what we do with our technology planning in general."

Mike Stepkoski of the LHRIC emphasized the importance of careful assessment and planning from day one, and submitted that, in his previous project experience with Annese, the most important element in those successes has been the attention to detail in the assessment and planning phases. Mr. Stepkoski also stated that the BOCES and Annese team "... we were very up front with the District about conducting a thorough assessment to comb through the district down to every user and room." Addressing each end user workgroup was of critical importance to understand what phones would best suit their needs, where the phone should be placed in each room and how to configure the software-based call-processing features to best support their job requirements through an intelligent, highly customized dial plan and call flow. "Really, there were no surprises as we went through the implementation process," said Mr. Stepkoski, "and I think that was the most important part of it."

Implementation and Support

The White Plains Unified Communications project was one of the most complex installations ever undertaken by the Annese and BOCES team. The District wanted the project to occur while school was in session, with no interruption to voice communications during school

hours. This presented unique challenges for the implementation team. First, the Ethernet switching backbone had to be upgraded to support intelligent packet transport and prioritization of voice, video and standard data traffic groups, and to provide power over Ethernet where needed to power the new IP phones over the data cable to avoid the need for local AC power at each phone location.

Next, the requirement for seamless migration from the old phone system to the new while school was in session required careful planning, close interaction and communication between the District staff, the implementation team (LHRIC and Annese) and the public phone company. The plan was developed to cut the district over one building at a time.

Working closely with the phone company made the cutover nearly transparent to the end users. They had the new phone and the old phone on their desks simultaneously. Upon the cutover of their building, they were able to continue to dial the same four digit extensions they had always used to connect to any of the newly installed IP phones, or any of the still active old phones. Annese made this possible by complex and careful programming of the new Cisco software-based call-processing system at the District and proper programming on the phone company's switch. "That was a great thing; we made it seamless to the user," said Mike Stepkoski of LHRIC.

John Curry, Project Manager for the District, had this to say about the overall installation: "I think 'team' is the keyword. It was a seamless process. In terms of professional development, Annese did an excellent job. Their trainer's background [being from BOCES and education] helped very much knowing where we were coming from and what our needs were. We also had outstanding support from the LHRIC and Annese implementation team. They put in time outside of regular hours so as not to impact [staff and students] during school hours. The day of the High School cutover was key in that they provided a full team of engineers with varying Cisco certifications and spread them out across the High School to make sure that the largest cutover went very smoothly."

Post cutover, the Annese and LHRIC team have shown their true abilities to really support a customer. This team has implemented software updates and upgrades, completed additional training for the District's system administration team as well as end users, and effectively responded to the occasional problem with speed, accuracy and the utmost attention to customer care. John Curry also stated that post-installation operations are an ongoing process and that the District has enjoyed continuous support from Annese and BOCES. "We have had some minor issues that are normal and when we needed the help, help was provided. The depth of the organization is there to support us."

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The Outcome

With such strong emphasis on assessment, planning and design, the outcome of the project was totally predictable: Success and satisfaction.

Mike Lynch, Director of Facilities for the District, used to deal with a constant stream issues and complaints from end users regarding the old phone system. He commented on the impact the project has had on his department: "One thing it has done for us is that, in my office all the secretaries have been trained by Annese on how to handle basic troubleshooting and repairs that are needed. They are now kind of like 'Maytag repair-men' in relation to the old phone system. They used to field about 10-15 phone complaints a day. Now we only get maybe about 4 to 5 calls per month, and they are usually just requests for moves or changes and rarely that

something is broken. The change has been phenomenal from my point of view."

In closing, White Plains City Schools found value, functionality, and business success through the proper approach and implementation of a Cisco Unified Communications system, by teaming up with the right organizations to get the job done well, on time and on budget.