

Grandview Independent School District

Accessing and Distributing Content from a Central Source



Organization

Grandview Independent School District

Industry

Education

VBrick Products

- **VBrick Dual-Channel Media Encoders**
- **VBrick IP Receivers**
- **VBrick EtherneTV**

Applications

Streaming and On-Demand Video for Smart Classroom Instruction

The premise behind the Smart Classroom concept is that technology can make instruction easier, the curriculum broader and learning more compelling. But technology can hinder as well as help if it isn't easy to implement, manage and use.

Despite its relatively small size, Grandview Independent School District's consistently superior test scores speak eloquently about its effective instructional methods and use of technology. A short drive south of Fort Worth, Texas, Grandview is home to over 100 classrooms, 1,100 students and four schools offering lessons from Kindergarten through High School. But the district had its own lessons to learn when it decided to implement an interactive audio-visual system in every classroom.

The Challenge

Broaden the District's curriculum and teaching tools without complicating the tasks of teaching or learning

Technology is no stranger to Grandview ISD's classrooms, but its application hasn't been without problems. Until recently, for example, the competition for document projectors was so fierce among faculty that some members taped the electrical cord to their classroom floor to prevent a projector from being removed.

During a visit to a neighboring district, Grandview's superintendent discovered what appeared to be a solution: a centralized system that allowed distribution and display of content to projectors in every classroom from junior high on up.

He returned with his district's technical staff, who were impressed by what the system could achieve. They were less impressed, however, by how the system worked.

"Their system was so complicated, it required a second look, and then a third," said Doug Allen, the Technology Director for Grandview ISD. "We studied, and studied and studied it, and thought, 'There has got to be a better way to do this.'"

The system Allen described involved two large equipment racks filled with a maze of encoders and decoders all connected by a web of wires running between them. It also required a custom program to control the system, as well as its own dedicated twisted pair data network.

Regardless, Grandview's superintendent had asked him to deliver something that could provide similar results back home.

The Solution

A packaged projection system that integrated an intuitive web-based video portal for quick, easy access to streaming and on-demand video

Allen set out to find a packaged projection solution that didn't require him to integrate components from several manufacturers. After some initial research, he settled on Extron's Polevault system, which offered a simple solution for displaying content in classrooms across the district. That left one remaining challenge: finding a way to access and distribute content from a central source.

The Solution, continued

Allen found VBrick encoders a simple, easily integrated solution for broadcasting video content using the district's existing network.

"When we first started this, we thought we were going to need a complex setup on each campus," said Allen. "When we learned VBrick's solution could distribute content to the whole district from one central location we stopped looking any further."

Four VBrick Dual-Channel Windows® Media Encoders, and four IP receivers – each pair corresponding to a specific school were installed - along with VBrick's EtherneTV server, for video-on-demand and content management.

The Benefits

Quick, easy access to streaming and on-demand video content to help make instruction easier, the curriculum broader and learning more compelling

Today, Grandview ISD's faculty can access and display educational video resources from Discovery Education without leaving their desks. The district's 106 classrooms can also display programs from cable news, the Science Channel, the History Channel and other cable stations with the help of a DirecTV promotion.

While streaming video of President Obama's inauguration overloaded internal servers in nearby Fort Worth, Grandview ISD's students watched the ceremony from their classrooms without any impact on the district's network. Other broadcasts the district has shared range from recorded video of a NASA nighttime launch to the local high school's graduation ceremony.

"I didn't think Mathematics or English teachers would use it, but they are big users," said Allen. "We have had math teachers show kids about things they are teaching, like shortcuts and lessons. English teachers are using a lot of video to tie it in with what students are reading."

As the district gets used to the new technology, it has found new applications at every level. Administrators have considered broadcasting safety videos directly to classrooms. Staff at the middle school are discussing a weekly student-produced news broadcast; and even the superintendent has used the technology during school board presentations.

In most of these applications, the content is the center of attention. For Allen, however, the benefit is the technology's simple, compact versatility.

"All that equipment I had mentioned from the other school was for one campus. That was just their high school," he said. "I've got everything to run the VBrick system set up here in my office, and I can distribute everything and anything the faculty may want from K through 12 from here."

About VBrick Systems, Inc.

VBrick is the leader in Enterprise IP Video solutions, with over 9,000 corporate, education and government customers and 60,000 installations worldwide. VBrick solutions work over standard IP networks and the Internet to deliver rich media communications that connect people everywhere – from employees and customers, to partners and shareholders. Our comprehensive product suite and end-to-end solutions are used in a wide range of live and on-demand applications including meeting and event broadcasts, distance learning, digital signage, TV distribution, video surveillance, and Web-based marketing campaigns. Headquartered in Wallingford, CT, VBrick's products and services are available through industry-leading value-added resellers.

For more information, visit www.vbrick.com



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Doug Allen

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