

School District Improves Message Reach with InformaCast



The Challenge

Necedah Area School District needed a better way to reach students and staff, but was facing issues with its outdated analog paging system.

The Solution

The district upgraded to IP speakers that utilize InformaCast to manage messaging and announcements to ensure critical information is sent to and received by those who need it.

Three Schools, One Building, Untold Challenges

Necedah Area School District is a rural district located in central Wisconsin. It houses its elementary, middle and high school in one building. With 700 students and 130 staff and faculty, communicating messages to the right audiences is a crucial component of running day-to-day operations smoothly.

When Kris Saylor, director of technology, was given the opportunity to renovate the district's overhead paging system, he knew he needed a solution that would provide better reach than the current analog system.

"Our overhead paging system had been in place for 18 years and was outdated when it was installed," said Saylor. "It was an ugly, cobbled mess that people were afraid to touch because they didn't know what would happen if they tried to make adjustments."

The district also experienced issues making sure everyone was hearing messages when they were sent.

"We had speakers placed every six feet throughout the school, but no one could hear anything," said Saylor. "This was the case even when hallways were quiet, and made it nearly impossible to communicate information when students were in the halls or gym."

Saylor also dealt with complications trying to distinguish separate zones for each of the schools in the building. Staff that needed to send messages also faced a multi-step process to get out simple messages. He needed a system that was flexible, easy-to-use and reached everyone.



InformaCast and IP Speakers Bring Everything Together

Using Advanced Network Devices, Saylor installed IP speakers throughout the building to provide clear audio and scrolling announcements. With the help of InformaCast he and his team have been able to drastically improve how they schedule bells, configure zones and send messages.

“Our classrooms change throughout the day,” said Saylor. “So it’s important for us to have the flexibility InformaCast provides, to set up zones and make sure we are minimizing classroom interruptions.”

For example, previously, the district’s analog paging system was divided into 12 zones, but when Saylor was working on a new system, he found his staff were only using three of them.

“I didn’t want to create zones simply for the sake of creating zones, but it was important that what was created would be used.”

Currently, the district has zones set up to reach everyone in the building, a zone each for the elementary, middle, and high school, one combined middle and high zone, one zone for outside speakers and one zone specifically for the gymnasium. Saylor has also set up zones within those zones for more specified instances.

This led to the district changing almost every process and procedure they had in place. It helped streamline the steps needed to make a page, saving time when critical information needed to be shared. This includes scrolling text that appears on the digital displays of the IP speakers. This has helped minimize classroom interruptions while still reaching everyone who needs the information.

According to Saylor, the success the district has experienced can be contributed to one main factor.

“What I like most is the usability of InformaCast,” explained Saylor. “It has a simple user interface and works without complications. And the potential to expand its use for other situations is very appealing.”

Building a Foundation, Expanding for the Future

While the district primarily uses InformaCast for its bells and overhead PA system, Saylor is working on expanding the district’s use of InformaCast to take further advantage of the system’s safety features.

“Eventually, we want InformaCast to help us manage all kinds of events,” said Saylor. “For severe weather like tornadoes, to building evacuations and lockdowns, we’ll be using InformaCast to handle any type of situation that impacts student safety.”

In addition, the district is looking to tie InformaCast into its door security system, and utilize the flashing lights on its IP speakers to indicate certain situations, such as tornado warnings.

InformaCast helps school districts across the country with emergency notification, security, safety and more to provide safe and secure learning environments.

Visit <https://www.singlewire.com/solutions-k12.html> to learn more about the flexibility InformaCast offers for scheduling and safety in K-12 schools.