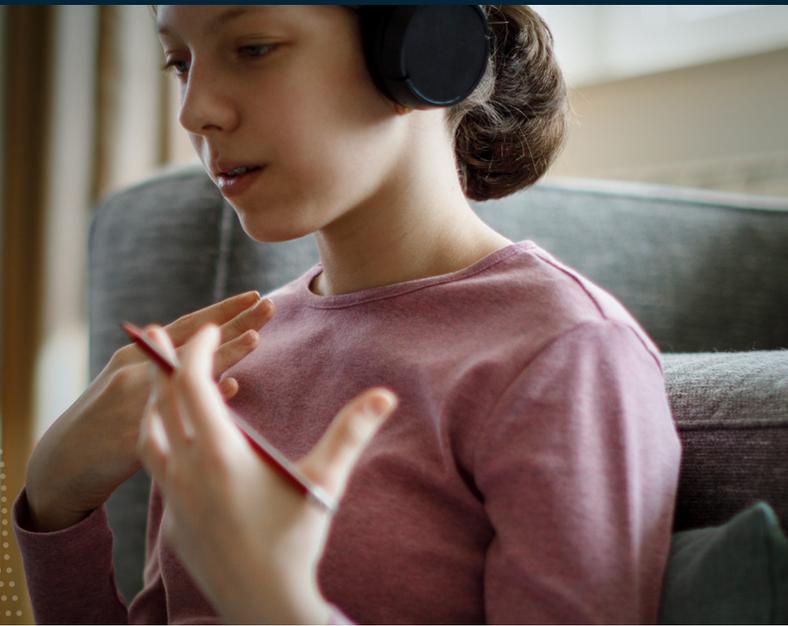


Case Study

Enabling secure collaboration for Columbus educators



Client

A school district in Columbus, Ohio, serves nearly 50,000 students, employs a staff of 8,500 teachers and administrators, and operates dozens of educational facilities, including elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as career technical schools.

Fast facts

CBTS assisted the city's IT department in the design and launch of a suite of improved remote conferencing and collaboration tools for use by teachers, students, and administrators. Initially, the district's remote conferencing system included around 100 active users. Throughout the course of the new system's deployment process, 10,000 new users were integrated. After the new capabilities were brought online, the total number of remote education and virtual meetings exceeded 7,600 in April, compared to a high of 802 in March.

Challenge	CBTS solution	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing network infrastructure and application suite weren't suitable for the volume of remote instruction called for during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several critical use cases needed to be prepared for and district employees required extensive training for the new technology. Integrate Active Directory and single sign-on (SSO) within 7 day window. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A brief but thorough consultation and planning period was used to address all critical use cases and help create new policy around effective use of the collaboration technology. Secure Webex meeting rooms were provisioned for both group instruction and private meetings. Project kickoff to first training was from March 24 to April 3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and administrators now have the tools they need to manage their workloads and continue providing for their students. District employees were trained and prepared to use their new applications, while network infrastructure was updated to accommodate the additional traffic. Met all guidelines and timelines from the client around Active Directory and protecting student information while implementing single sign-on.

Challenge

As the COVID-19 pandemic forced educators to adapt to shelter-in-place orders and find ways to continue classes remotely, the academic community of the client sought a partner to ensure it had the network infrastructure, applications, and policies it needed to continue lessons throughout the pandemic. There was a wide variety of use cases to consider; teachers needed to be able to lead virtual classrooms with their students and have face-to-face meetings with parents, students needed the capability to meet privately with instructors, administrators needed reliable contact with staff, and social workers and counselors needed to be able to reach students and their families at home.

Educators and IT specialists in the district were concerned that traditional collaboration platforms lacked the reliability and security they were looking for. Cisco Webex was the right solution for the school system for its industry-leading security.

The school district hoped to give administrators and teachers the tools they needed to intuitively manage their classrooms and meet with parents while keeping education sessions secure.

CBTS solution

CBTS stepped in as not only a subject matter expert but as a partner dedicated to equipping the school district with the right knowledge and capabilities to allow the 2019-2020 school year to continue with minimal disruption.

An extensive consultation process was initiated, during which CBTS worked closely with educators and administrators to define and plan for the multiple critical use cases the district needed to be addressed, from virtual classrooms to one-on-one meetings for specialized instruction and parent-teacher conferences. District personnel led the discussion around what they needed and how they needed it to be implemented.

Providing the tools was only a part of the equation, however. The district had little in the way of official policy guiding the proper use of these virtual collaboration applications. CBTS made specialized best practices training available for thousands of teachers in the district to acclimate them to remote teaching and prepare them to make the most use of their updated collaboration tools.

When the strategy was decided on, and district staff had been trained, deployment was executed on a short timeframe, with a thousand new users requiring registration into the district's new Cisco Webex platform. CBTS assisted the client's IT staff to integrate their Active Directory to reduce the time and complexity of adding all the new users into the system.

Implementing an enterprise single sign-on (SSO) solution also helped the school district cut down on password fatigue while increasing employee productivity and strengthening networking security. SSO combines with complementary systems to make the district's IT environment both safer and more convenient.

These steps helped the district transition to fully-online instruction, with a record-high number of virtual sessions and over 1.4 million meeting minutes being recorded in April. The district and its partners at CBTS are considering the implementation of virtual parent-teacher association meetings in the future as well.

Total for:	March 2020	April 2020	Total for:	March 2020	April 2020
Active hosts	141	1,280	Participants	5,099	35,999
Meetings	802	7,601	Participant Minutes	215,642	1,384,637

Noteworthy

In this case, CBTS did not propose Cisco Webex as a solution but was engaged by the client who was in search of a secure and unified solution. Members of the local teacher's union and IT administrators working at the schools themselves played a significant role in pushing for updates to the district's remote education capabilities, seeking the expertise of CBTS to help make it happen quickly.

Why CBTS

When the school district needed assistance to empower its staff to serve students remotely, CBTS consulted, planned, trained, and executed as needed to make the district's goals a reality. Click here for more information on how CBTS can help modernize your organization's remote collaboration and conferencing capabilities.