ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DISTANCE LEARNING CENTER

Overview

- ADE DLC wanted to supplement traditional classrooms with virtual teaching

- Implementation and training needed to take place during summer break

- Teachers now use video modules to enhance their students' learning

- Continuous education and training is available for faculty

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LEADERSHIP SUPPORT SERVICE

The Arkansas Department of Education Distance Learning Center (ADE DLC) administration were looking for a distance learning solution that would allow teachers to record classes so that students who missed class would be able to view the content on-demand and not fall behind in their studies.

The ADE DLC allows school districts to supplement their traditional education with distance learning. This is particularly valuable to districts that have difficulty finding highly qualified teachers and teachers who specialize in unique subject areas. Students in traditional classrooms connect to the distance learning classes via compressed interactive video and participate as if they were in a traditional classroom setting.

The ADE DLC was looking for a solution that was very accessible to students and teachers. The system couldn't use significant bandwidth during peak usage times, was cost effective, simple to use and easily maintained.

Action

Initially working with AT&T, Mike Lar, Program Director for the ADE DLC, was introduced to VBrick by IDS. After an extensive evaluation and testing period to make sure the equipment performed exactly the way they wanted it to, Mike settled on a complete VBrick video solution which included live video streaming, video on-demand, control and management capabilities.

The new distance learning system was designed and installed by IDS over the summer when students were on break. A total of 25 VBrick Windows Media Encoders (one for each teacher) were integrated with the existing video conferencing stations to create a platform to capture, stream and record. A centralized server provided control and management and was complemented with a high-performance on-demand server for recorded asset playback. Each teacher was then trained on how to use the system so that by the fall, they had a fully functioning video distribution system to rely on.

The EtherneTV solution was installed on the data side of the state network. In Arkansas, all public school buildings are connected to the data network. Of the 244 school districts, 242 are connected to the state video network. All distance learning classes are scheduled through an AT&T bridge so that live classes begin and end automatically. This is a huge advantage for teachers as they don't have to worry about setup or configurations daily. Using the system on the state video network, the ADE DLC has found security to be excellent - no outsiders can dial into a class by accident and the quality of service has been extremely reliable.

Results

Today, the IDS-VBrick video distribution system is used in a variety of ways. The ADE DLC quickly found that recording of entire classes was too long and cumbersome for their needs, so teachers typically edit their classroom recordings and post compressed components of key areas in each of their classes.

Teachers have also moved toward using the system to create separate video modules as an enhancement to the classroom experience. Teachers record and post these modules right from their own offices where students can later view them on-demand from their own computers.

Shirley Pickle, Instructional Coordinator for the ADE DLC, is tasked with doing teacher evaluations for all of the 26 distance learning teachers. Pickle performs both formal and informal observations regularly and finds it difficult to observe each teacher live on a regular basis. So, she relies on the VBrick system to help observe and perform the evaluations. "Typically, formal observations are scheduled ahead of time, but we record them so that I can view on-demand when my

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>
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> *INSTRUCTIONAL COORDINATOR*

schedule permits," said Pickle. For the informal observations, Pickle simply views live feed or any class that has been recorded. "It is much easier to observe more classes on a daily basis with the recordings or live through the video Media Control System," commented Pickle.

Parent-teacher conferences are also established via video and even discipline problems can be documented and dealt with using the video system.

Teachers find the IDS-VBrick system very easy to use and after their initial training, teachers can get refresher courses available via on-demand video. "We have found we don't need official follow-up training," said Lar. "The online video refresher courses work well for our teachers and they can complete the courses between classes or whenever is convenient for them. It truly is a self-training system."