LEVERAGING IPADS IN THE CLASSROOM

Challenges

With technology in the classroom advancing to a level where most students and teachers are using smartphones, tablets or computers to enrich the learning environment, the ability to get all of those devices online was extremely important. One of the major reasons the district wanted to update their wireless solution was to implement iPads for special education assessments. The school district had a time constraint due to an expiring grant as well as an implementation deadline that was the beginning of the following school year.

Selection Criteria

The school district was hoping to achieve a secure, reliable, and wired-comparable method to accessing the network. They did not want wireless to be viewed as a "convenience" but rather a viable alternative to physically patching in. In addition, they hoped that productivity would improve due to the many new advantages that introducing wireless to a classroom and administrative environment would provide. Vandis worked with a few wireless providers to provide demos, but from the discussion and results of these demos Aruba appeared to offer the same functionally that the district wanted in just one appliance. In addition the customer felt that Aruba's technology was by far the most sophisticated and offered the most features that the district felt that they could take advantage of.

Solution

Once the customer was satisfied that Aruba would be the best option, they worked with the Vandis engineering team to determine that Aruba's mobility solution would address the wide range of wireless and wired network mobility, security, and remote networking requirements. A redundant dedicated Master controller, multiple Local controllers all designed for fault tolerance/ high availability, Aruba Mobility Access Switches, as well as approximately 600 access points (APs) were placed throughout the district. The customer also purchased Aruba ClearPass to provide a scalable, easy to use visitor management solution that would provide a secure wireless network to guests and their employees. With so many devices on the network, the customer needed a way of identifying who is accessing the network, where they are, the mobile device they are using and how much bandwidth they are consuming.

Due to that requirement the customer leveraged Aruba's AirWave appliance which gave them end-to-end clarity and a centralized view to monitor mobile users that connect to the network.

Aruba was chosen by the customer for a variety of reasons. The first and foremost was they had already worked with Vandis and Aruba in the past. While the customer was open to other solutions, they already felt comfortable with Aruba due to the original small scale roll-out. The district also stressed that having a wireless network for teachers, students, and administrators to use was extremely important, but it would be worthless if it was not secure. Other competitors had a hard time working with the customer's complex network design (multiple Firewalls residing inside the customer's network) during the POC process. Aruba's ability to work with previously implemented firewalls, combined with the pre-existing relationship with the customer, made the decision an easy one.

Aruba also stood out from the competition because of its innovation and comprehensive view of wireless. Aruba realizes that the need for wireless is growing exponentially and understands where it fits within organizations. Above simply providing wireless access, their differentiated approach to user rights (individual-user based firewalls) is what sets them apart from other vendors, among other things.

Vandis was on hand to complete the entire install and to provide training to the customer's IT staff. The district came to Vandis because we were able to provide a guided, comprehensive overview of the product and tech setup. Prior experience working with the school district and working in many Aruba implementations helped the district feel more comfortable working with Vandis. Our engineers showed they had a firm grasp of the solution set and were able to diagnose the customer's issues and design a solution that would fit their needs.

Results

Since introducing the wireless solution to the district, students, teachers, and faculty have completely changed the way they connect to the network and access resources. Devices are no longer dependent on a physical wire. Teachers are able to leave one classroom and travel to another, all while staying connected to the network on their devices. Teachers are also now able to do wireless assessments that would enhance the students learning experiences. The customer was extremely satisfied with the solution and other districts that surrounded it were also impressed with how easy it was to connect to their network while visiting for conferences.