

SUMMIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACHIEVES HIGH-GRADE AUDIO

Success with
Exceptional
Audio Quality
During High
Impact
Meetings

OVERVIEW

Dubbed the “School of the Future”¹ by “U.S. News & World Report,” Summit Public Schools is a charter organization committed to developing students to become active and productive citizens of the future. Located in Silicon Valley—one of the most innovative and transformative regions in the United States—Summit Public Schools was born out of the area’s surprisingly poor matriculation rate and a high number of drop outs. Encompassing 14 schools and serving more than 6,000 students, the schools are supported by a number of prestigious partners such as Facebook² and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation³. The organization is focused on creating a rich collaborative environment where student’s can explore their passions and interests using today’s most advanced technology and educational practices.

The quality of the audio is so important. If you miss any part of the conversation—even one or two words—it throws off the entire meeting

Keeping up with such an ambitious mission requires a revolutionary, empowered leadership team and teaching faculty who needed to collaborate weekly in order to enerate ideas that will enrich their students’ learning experience and enable the school’s success.

But meeting face to face that often just wasn’t feasible. The time commitment and expense to bring the leadership team together was a huge drain on the school’s ➤

1. David Osborne, “The Schools of the Future”, January 19, 2016, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/knowledge-bank/articles/2016-01-19/californias-summit-public-schools-are-the-schools-of-the-future>

2. Casey Newton, “Inside Facebook’s plan to build a better school”, September 3, 2015, <http://www.theverge.com/2015/9/3/9252845/facebook-education-software-plp-summit>

3. SXSW Interview with Diane Tavenner, YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA96hR7G6Po>



resources. As CTO for Summit Public Schools, Bryant Wong realized deploying a video conferencing system could allow his leaders to continue collaborating without having to leave their home campuses. It fell to him to ensure the technology would enable the same level of success for every member of the organization as meeting in person.

“My vision was the leadership team would no longer need to meet physically because the conferencing solution would offer the same, if not better, collaborative experience,” said Wong.

CHALLENGE

Like most IT leaders, Wong took great care to select the best video conferencing solution for his organization. He set up dedicated meeting rooms in every building and properly scaled the network infrastructure to support the increased demand. However, once the rooms were being used, it didn't take long for everyone to realize the impact audio has on creating an effective meeting. The conference phones they were using delivered poor quality sound that made it difficult for them to understand each other. An echo coming from the system often interrupted the natural flow of meetings. Most frustrating, however, were the constant outages they experienced when the conference phones would shut down if the volume was turned up beyond 40 percent capacity. Getting a meeting back online created an additional burden on the technology department, which had to send out team members to perform emergency system resets and adjust the volume control to an acceptable threshold for the system.

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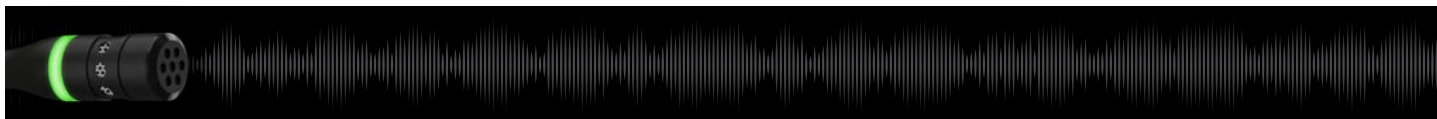
*Bryant Wong, Chief Technology Officer,
Summit Public Schools*

“The quality of the audio is so important. If you miss any part of the conversation—even one or two words—it throws off the entire meeting,” said Wong. “The system just wasn't reliable, which was negatively impacting school leadership and members of the organization. It was inhibiting their ability to meet effectively.”

In an effort to resolve the quality issues, Wong reached out to the conference phone manufacturer, who recommended purchasing additional units for each room to provide sufficient volume without taxing any one unit. But even the added devices did not remedy the issues and the poor audio experience persisted.

“I was throwing more money at a solution that wasn't working,” said Wong. “We spent money on building the right infrastructure and bringing in the right Internet connection to be able to have this high quality experience only to have audio fail when video should be the biggest problem. I was tired of my CEO telling me audio was crappy when a lot of resources were being dedicated to allow so many people to come together and meet like this.”

At this point Wong made the call to abandon the audio solution in lieu of what was best for the organization. In his search for a better conference phone that would deliver consistent and reliable high-quality audio he uncovered a promising solution: the Yamaha YVC-1000. ➤



SOLUTION

With the help of IT solutions provider Virtual Graffiti, the school brought in the Yamaha YVC-1000 for a test run. Both the simplicity and the quality of the conference phone amazed everyone the first time they used it. It took very little instruction to get the device up and running; they just plugged it in and it was ready to go. The phone picked up voices clearly and the audio was loud so everyone could hear wherever they were at in the room. It was easy to use and consistently reliable. It provided a better experience for everyone—even the least tech savvy of the team—in every location, including one with an acoustically challenging concrete wall, where they noticed a massive improvement.

Having had such a successful 30-day trial, Summit Public Schools bought additional units to replace the old conference phones. The new audio system has given the organization peace of mind and allowed the leadership to resume its high impact, collaborative meetings. Because team members can now trust the technology to provide an effective experience, meetings are once again focused on accomplishing the goals and objectives of the school. Today, the video conferencing rooms are in use eight to 12 times a day across the different buildings, with meetings lasting anywhere from 30 minutes to three or four hours.

“The YVC-1000 looks high quality and delivers the quality I expect without spending more than I need to, like I was with our old system,” Wong said. “We spent a lot of money on our video infrastructure. It just didn’t make any sense to then have a substandard audio product in place. With the new conference phone, I’ve spent the right amount of money once and I get to leverage the full investment of that unit.”

FUTURE

By choosing the Yamaha YVC-1000, Summit Public Schools improved its collaborative experience with high-grade audio and finds peace of mind. Additional YVC-1000 conference phones have been purchased and placed in meeting rooms in multiple locations across the nation, expanding Wong’s collaboration vision even further.

“Longer term, I could imagine using the system to enable more collaborative learning experiences across the schools,” Wong said. “We could give our students access to the system to participate in video conferences where they can benefit from learning what a high-quality professional meeting feels like. It would be a great example for teaching our kids the importance of audio quality for any level of collaboration they might experience out in the real world.”



Summit Public Schools had such great success with the Yamaha YVC-1000 that it deployed the conference phone system at other locations, such as this one in Washington.

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