SCHOOLS (K-12)

CHRISTIAN COLLEGE Geelong | Australia

CHRISTIAN COLLEGE PROVIDES WIRELESS ACCESS FOR UP TO 350 CONCURRENT STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS ACROSS THREE CAMPUSES. A Meru Networks virtualized wireless LAN provides instant connection and seamless roaming.

"Staff and students were quickly commenting on better connectivity and the ability to roam without dropping out of the network. The constant flow of students coming to the IT office for assistance has dropped to almost zero."

Ashley Walters | IT Director, Christian College

Challenges

:: Needed to accommodate high volumes of students logging in simultaneously.

:: Connections dropped frequently, interrupting and delaying lessons.

:: Roaming was nonexistent.

Results

:: Instant connection times and roaming without dropped connections.

:: Issues have dropped to almost zero.

:: IT department has regained 25 percent of its time.

Challenge

Over the past 25 years, Christian College in Geelong, Victoria has developed a tradition of excellence in education balanced with a desire to build strong Christian foundations in the lives of its students. The dedicated staff works with parents and approximately 1800 students across six campuses to ensure that each child's learning experience is challenging and successful from kindergarten through year 12.

Staff and students have access to desktop and laptop computers. The school's computer network is Windows-based, with a small number of Apple Macintosh computers for music and performing arts staff. A wireless network spans the six campuses, providing wireless access for all users. However, the network was not robust enough to meet users' needs. At any given time, up to 350 students require concurrent connection to the wireless network. This high volume of users created drops in connections and frozen access points. Roaming was almost nonexistent, forcing staff and students to continuously log back into the network if they were mobile. These issues also created additional work for the IT department.

"Wireless network access was becoming quite frustrating for staff and students," said Ashley Walters, IT director for Christian College. "We planned to use laptops to further learning and the school's curriculum, but this was not possible with the access issues being experienced."

To address these issues, Christian College decided to replace its existing wireless system. It needed a solution that would dramatically improve wireless access while simultaneously reducing the cost and complexity associated with installation, training, and ongoing network support.

Solution

Christian College explored numerous wireless network solutions. Most required costly installation and training. They were also too complicated and time-intensive. When Christian College contacted ASI Solutions, a national reseller of Meru's Australian distributors, Wavelink Communications, it learned about Meru Networks' 802.11n virtualized wireless local area networks (WLANs).

Unlike traditional microcell-based wireless LANs, Meru's patented, standards-based innovations re-think wireless LAN architectures and help eliminate today's issues with coverage, mission-critical voice delivery, scalability, and cost. The company's virtualized approach addresses everything from radio frequency management, switched wireless architectures, and wireless service assurance to proactive diagnostics, management, and optimized application performance. All Meru access points (APs) operate on a single seamless channel, eliminating the need for complex coverage surveys and channel planning. Simply to deploy and manage, the Meru wireless LAN enables school IT administrators, who may not be wireless experts, to easily extend coverage by simply adding APs.

Wavelink and ASI Solutions provided Christian College with a Meru trial system for evaluation. The trial enabled the school to evaluate its performance and suitability. Following a successful testing phase, Christian College purchased three Meru wireless controllers and 90 access points for three of its six campuses.

Christian College easily deployed and configured Meru Networks' virtualized wireless LAN solution in a middle school campus first, without needing specialised technicians. It took only three days to install 30 access points, with full deployment and issues resolution completed in one week. Installation in other campuses followed.

"ASI and Wavelink's support was great," said Walters. "They continually kept in touch during the testing phase to ensure that the school was satisfied and to assist with implementation, a value-add not offered to the school by any other wireless network vendor."

Benefits

Christian College instantly noticed significant improvements. Even with high numbers of concurrent users, connection times are fast. Log-in issues virtually disappeared, which also improved learning time. Teachers no longer have to delay class or interrupt teaching to help students log on or deal with other minor problems. This makes them more productive and satisfied, as they can conduct lessons on time and with more control.

"Staff and students were quickly commenting on better connectivity and the ability to roam without dropping out of the network, said Walters. "The constant flow of students coming to the IT office for assistance has dropped to almost zero."

A drop in issues freed the IT department to focus on more strategic projects, instead of issue resolution. The school estimates that IT staff have regained 25 per cent of their time because of the Meru virtualized wireless LAN deployment.

Wavelink and Meru technical support have been superb. To accommodate a higher-than- expected volume of students logging in simultaneously, the controller firmware was quickly upgraded and the issues was resolved.

"After brief conversations with technical support, the issue was easily solved," said Walters. "Since then, the system has been performing flawlessly. Christian College is extremely happy with the quality of the product and the support provided by Meru Networks and its local partners."

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