

School for the Deaf Uses Video Technology to Build Community, Reduce Isolation



Learn how **Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf** integrated video into its teaching, learning, and operations—and read some of its best practices for success.

Tearing down walls

At Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf on Long Island, New York, administrators, educators, staff, and students are eliminating barriers with video technology. Deaf students engage seamlessly with hearing students at other schools, and deaf staff members interact more easily with their colleagues.

And they're using Cisco Video Conferencing and Webex to make it happen.

Challenges

- Eliminating barriers to communication for deaf students, educators, and staff
- Deploying a solution that scales to accommodate new teaching and learning approaches, as well as innovations in technology
- Reducing operating costs

Solutions

- Designing an environment that leverages technology—including Cisco Video Conferencing Systems and Cisco Webex—to foster collaboration in the workplace and expand teaching and learning
- Increasing efficiency and streamlining operations
- Expanding opportunities for engagement among administrators, educators, staff, and students—as well as with the broader school community

“The collaborative tools provided by Cisco allow both students and faculty at Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf to communicate in ways that would otherwise be done only in person or through a third-party interpreter. Cisco and Core BTS have created a state-of-the-art, video-based communication solution for us here at Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf that fosters teamwork among staff and allows students to interact in ways that were previously impossible.”

Michael Killian

Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf



Results

- Greater accessibility for the entire school community
- Broad access to new learning resources and approaches—often outside the walls of the traditional classroom
- Multiple technologies consolidated onto a single platform for simplified operation and management

“We thought we wanted just a phone upgrade, but we were drawn by the potential to innovate with Cisco video technology. We have a community where the majority of our population is deaf, including all students, many staff members, and some family members, and the idea of expanding access with video was very compelling.”

Orian Iglesias

Chief Technology Officer
Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf

“Sign is the primary language used here. One of our deaf colleagues used to leave his desk multiple times each day to engage with colleagues in other departments. Using Relay was cumbersome, and sending an email to ask a simple question seemed like too much. Now, with our new Cisco technology, he can pick up the phone, access the video, and sign his question for a quick response. It makes his work so much easier.”

Rob Henrichs

Network Engineer
Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf



Challenges

From its beginnings more than 60 years ago in a historic manor house on an 86-acre estate in the Long Island community of Mill Neck, New York, Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf today serves nearly 200 children in programs spanning pre-K through high school. Students come from 40 Long Island school districts and the five boroughs of New York City to take advantage of quality educational opportunities and comprehensive services designed to help deaf learners unlock their potential.

Administrators and educators at Mill Neck believe that providing everyone at the school with the newest technologies can facilitate access to knowledge, build confidence, and foster more collaborative relationships. For many years, the school has partnered with solutions provider and Cisco Gold partner Core BTS, and when the time came to upgrade an aging phone system, they approached Core BTS once again. Core BTS is committed to understanding their customers' challenges and then working with them to achieve their goals. In the case of Mill Neck Manor, this meant helping the school think beyond a traditional dial tone.

"We thought we wanted just a phone upgrade, but we were drawn by the potential to innovate with Cisco video technology," says Orian Iglesias, chief technology officer at Mill Neck Manor. "We have a community where the majority of our population is deaf, including all students, many staff members, and some family members, and the idea of expanding access with video was very compelling." Core BTS helped Mill Neck Manor see that through the effective use of video, the school could expand opportunities for students to connect with the hearing community outside school walls, minimize feelings of isolation among deaf employees, and realize greater operating efficiencies and cost savings.

Solutions

The capabilities of Cisco collaboration technologies—including Video Conferencing and Webex—were integral to Core BTS's discussions with Mill Neck Manor, and the school began for the first time to envision IT as an enabler of teaching and learning as well as of the institution's business functions rather than as simply a cost center. Mill Neck Manor made a major investment in collaboration and networking technology, and the availability of video was a key factor in the school's decision.

Today, each of Mill Neck Manor's classrooms and administrative offices has a Cisco IP Phone 8865, which offers high-quality, high-definition video, and office laptops and desktop systems also provide access to Cisco Webex. The school's large boardroom and smaller conference rooms now integrate Cisco Video Conferencing. All collaboration technology is supported on a Cisco network, which relies on Cisco Switching and Routing solutions.



Results

Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf's IT team has seen firsthand how video has changed the way those at the school communicate. "Sign is the primary language used here," explains Rob Henrichs, the school's network engineer. "One of our deaf colleagues used to leave his desk multiple times each day to engage with colleagues in other departments. Using Relay was cumbersome, and sending an email to ask a simple question seemed like too much. Now, with our new Cisco technology, he can pick up the phone, access the video, and sign his question for a quick response. It makes his work so much easier."

"It's about even more than efficiency," Iglesias adds. "Being deaf can be very isolating, and now he—and everyone here—is more integrated and more able to feel a part of day-to-day life."

Students are able to feel less isolated, too. Since the solutions were implemented, students have used the video conferencing technology in the school's conference rooms to collaborate with other students across Long Island. "With video conferencing, our students have participated in app challenges and CIS programs; they've even been able to teach hearing students some sign language," Iglesias continues.

Mill Neck Manor's adoption of video technology has had an impact on the school's business operations as well. Board members used to travel to Mill Neck monthly from across the U.S., but several meetings in the past year have been held over video, saving the time and money typically associated with travel.

Next steps

Administrators and educators at Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf understand that they are just beginning to realize the potential of video technology. Right now, the technology is used primarily within the school itself, but they are looking forward to expanding access beyond school walls—to parents who would like to connect with educators, to educational resources and experts who could enhance the curriculum, and to other educators for best-practice sharing, for example.

The school is also piloting video voice mail and exploring the possibility of integrating captioning on phones.

The potential for exciting new applications is endless.

Product list

Collaboration:

Cisco Video Conferencing
MX700
MX300
DX80
Cisco Webex
Cisco IP Phone 8865

Enterprise Networking:

Cisco Catalyst 3850 Switches
Cisco Catalyst 2960 Switches
Cisco Aironet 2700 Series Access Points

For More Information

[Learn more](#) about Cisco Collaboration Solutions.

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