



Coppell Independent School District

Bluesocket extends learning beyond the classroom, enabling wireless computer access to K-12 students and teachers alike in places where they need it most – which increasingly means outside the classroom.



Located in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, Coppell Independent School District (ISD), has a total of 14 schools and three administration facilities with roughly 10,000 students and 1,200 employees. Coppell ISD believes that wireless technology will help students get the most out of their computing resources. This textbook story opens on Bluesocket.

BLUESOCKET DEPLOYMENT AT COPPELL ISD

- Out of box management for Proxim tri-mode 4000 access points
- Supports 802.11a and 802.11b/g
- Ease of use, single sign-on interface, cost-effective
- Support for RADIUS authentication
- Increased performance and response time for end users
- Distributes the load of certificate management for things like WPA and EAP
- Supports 600 laptops, with handhelds and PDAs to be added
- Creates a custom learning environment

Coppell Independent School District (ISD)

Coppell ISD is using wireless to break down classroom walls and extend the learning environment. Tasked with administration, curriculum development, hiring teachers and upholding education standards, Coppell ISD believes that wireless technology will help students get the most out of their computing resources.

The Challenge for Coppell ISD

Chad Branum, the district's director of technology, began investigating the promise of wireless networking technology. In a wireless environment, not only would students be freed from the confines of traditional computer labs, but they'd also be able to move beyond their desks and the classroom itself.

"One of our main IT goals is to expand the learning environment for our students," Branum said. "We don't want learning in our district confined to the classroom, and one of the best ways to expand educational boundaries is through wireless technology."

Coppell ISD started their wireless push at a single high school, using it as a test-bed for the entire district. Branum initially installed wireless gear from ReefEdge, but that

company soon went out of business, leaving Coppell with no support and no future expansion possibilities with that company's equipment.

"All in all, the trial was successful, proving the benefits of going wireless, but we needed to find a wireless provider we could count on for the long term," he said.

Soon after the initial test, Branum consulted Davenport Technologies, a local wireless security and network solutions company that Coppell ISD had worked with successfully in the past designing and implementing technology solutions. Davenport Technologies reviewed Coppell's requirements and suggested that Branum take a look at Bluesocket. Davenport had been implementing networking equipment from Burlington, Massachusetts-based Bluesocket for many of its other customers and recommended that Coppell give them a try. With a focus on the education sector and nearly 1000 customers including Harvard Medical School and the University of Michigan, Bluesocket looked like a good fit.

Still, Branum had to prove Bluesocket was worthy and put it to the test to ascertain whether it suited their educational goals.



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“We chose Bluesocket for its ease of management, cost-effectiveness and value, single sign-on interface, and performance and response time.”

Chad Branum
Director of Technology
Coppell ISD

“Our overall goals in our wireless upgrade included creating a more secure networking environment, having the ability to establish roles and policies more effectively, and finding a way to support authentication mechanisms like 802.1x, WPA, and LDAP,” Branum said.

With a tight IT budget, cost-effectiveness was also important, and since a tight budget means a small IT staff, Branum also hoped to find a system that was easy to manage and wouldn’t drain scarce IT resources.

“We brought in Bluesocket, tested it, and it supported everything we were looking for,” he said.

The Bluesocket Solution

Bluesocket’s Wireless Gateways support enterprise-scale wireless LAN deployments from the network edge to the core. The Wireless Gateways (WGs) add security features such as authentication, encryption, and rogue access point detection, while providing management features that allows IT staff to manage the WLAN as effortlessly as the existing LAN. Unlike other wireless solutions, Bluesocket is designed to be access-point agnostic, meaning that in a cost-conscious environment such as education, Bluesocket will manage the existing wireless deployment, rather than forcing customers into the costly choice of having to tear out and replace their existing access points.

At Coppell ISD, the Bluesocket Wireless Gateways extend the network wirelessly and manage Proxim 4000 access points, which sit at the network edge. The Proxim APs are tri-mode, providing support for 802.11a and 802.11b/g.

“We chose Bluesocket for its ease of management, its cost-effectiveness and value, its

single sign-on interface, performance and response time,” Branum said. “It supports our RADIUS authentication requirements and makes it easy for our users to participate in a custom learning environment.”

According to Branum, one unexpected advantage of the Bluesocket system is that the system distributes the load of certificate management for things like WPA and EAP.

Other systems send certificates back to a central device, which creates a lag in response times and a network bottleneck. With Bluesocket, the load is distributed and users experience better performance.

Coppell has a 24-strand private fiber ATM network, which provides 622 Mbps and is used for both voice and data. Every site in the district is tied back to an IT service center in Coppell. Currently, there are about 600 laptops in the district, but the district has launched a matching funds campaign to raise money for more. “Our goal is to get a laptop into the hands of every student,” Branum said.

With a wireless infrastructure in place, Coppell is also looking to add handheld computers, or PDAs, to the mix. They’ve begun a trail that integrated PDAs into the physical education curriculum, with instructors having access to fitness software. In the future, Coppell would like to give teachers the ability to access a student’s records from a handheld device over the wireless network, enhancing the teacher’s ability to serve students in any setting.

“We think of wireless technology as a tool that helps us enhance instruction,” Branum said. “It creates a more collaborative environment, giving students better access to their teachers via email, while helping the teachers to access any information they need from anywhere.”

Secure Mobility® Solutions



For more information, visit our Website at www.bluesocket.com

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