

Mt. Olive Township School District Aces Online Learning with Student WiFi

Overview

The Mount Olive Township School District in Morris County, New Jersey is comprised of four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school, serving students from kindergarten to high school throughout five nearby towns. They truly are their motto: "Ready for What Comes Next".

The Challenge

The district's Superintendent, Dr. Robert R. Zywicki is one of only 15 recipients across the country to be named "District Thought Leader" by Future Ready School so it's no surprise that when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, he was quick to implement remote teaching to address sudden physical school closures. However, the remaining challenge was how to overcome the "digital divide" and ensure that all students, even those without Internet access, could have access to virtual learning. "Digital divide" in education technology refers to the inequalities in physical access to technology and resources needed to effectively participate as a digital student citizen.

Finding out on a Thursday that the schools would be closed for an indefinite period starting on the following Monday, Dr. Zywicki knew he had only three days to implement a solution that would cover all students in his school district. For education to continue with virtual learning, devices and Internet connectivity were needed to be provided equitably to all students across the region. Luckily the district had enough WiFi enabled Chromebook devices to distribute to all students. The missing link, however, was ensuring access through WiFi to the Internet for those students who did not currently have access at home.

The Solution

Dr. Zywicki knew he could count on the district's decade-long trusted partnership with Lightpath to get things done quickly. Having successfully worked with Dr. Zywicki's team in the past, Kaity Passe, Director of Enterprise Service at Lightpath, was only a text away and ready with a solution.

Since time was of the essence, Kaity Passe quickly brought together a Lightpath team that included Ken Florenz, Director of Managed Services to help implement the Lightpath Student WiFi solution that would enable the district to overcome any digital divide. The solution provides students who have school-issued WiFi-enabled devices the ability to use the Lightpath WiFi hotspot network to access their school's VPN network and resources from home if they do not already have dedicated Internet access. Individual districts are



Location:
Mount Olive, NJ

Industry:
Education

Solutions Used:
Student WiFi

responsible for the VPN component and content filtering while students are leveraging the Lightpath WiFi hotspots at home or in their community.

In just one weekend, the team quickly implemented Student WiFi and deployed additional hotspots for those students outside the Lightpath footprint — eliminating the digital divide and providing coverage for all 4,600 students.

To help fund these solutions, the Mount Olive Township School District took advantage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act or CARES Act, which earmarks \$30.7 billion under an Education Stabilization Fund for states to spend on education, including \$13.2 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief Fund and \$14 billion for Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund.

The Outcome

With the help of Lightpath, the Mt. Olive Township School District quickly deploying Student WiFi to provide distance learning for all students in the district and bridging the digital divide in just three days.

As an added benefit, the Student WiFi solution helps not only secure access for periods of a shutdown, but also addresses ongoing virtual learning needs of students. “I’m on the front lines of dealing with kids and education. Lightpath’s support helped us do all the things many districts could not do, like providing special education resources and occupational therapy as well as access for students who are immunocompromised and cannot physically attend school. Lightpath’s Student WiFi solution positively impacted a lot of kids, and that’s an important part of this story,” declared Superintendent Robert Zywicki.

The district was prepared for what came next and will also be prepared for whatever will come. “Going forward, we are going to be one-to-one for every kid to and from school,” asserts Dr. Zywicki. “Not many other school districts can say they have coverage for all students, but we provided equity and overcame the digital divide” with the help of Lightpath.”

To date, Lightpath has partnered with 129 school districts and connected more than 250,000 student devices to its hotspot network. Student WiFi is part of a Lightpath effort to enable remote learning to become a reality in communities. If you are a school district interested in seeing if Student WiFi is a good fit for you, please contact your existing Account Executive or if you are not a current Lightpath School customer, please Contact Us or call 877.544.4872. To learn more about all that Lightpath has to offer, visit lightpathfiber.com.