



Lamar County School District

Fastest-Growing School District in Mississippi Chooses Aerohive to Meet Needs for Density and Digital Instruction

Challenges

- Deploy wireless solution to all schools to accommodate greater density and BYOD
- Acquire a solution with simple network management without extensive IT training requirements
- Enable Wi-Fi solution for eventual 1:1 classroom environment
- Implement solution with superior interoperability with Google Classroom

Results

- Gigabit Wi-Fi adopted to meet emerging technology at superior price performance
- Controller-less wireless network solution in place across entire District to meet density requirements
- Seamless integration with Google apps and Apple technologies
- Exceptional customer support from Aerohive removes additional IT burden

About Lamar County School District

Lamar County School District (LCSD) is based in Purvis, Mississippi and operates within four distinct local communities including Sumrall, Purvis, Oak Grove and Baxterville. The District includes 15 schools serving close to 10,000 students and employing 1300 faculty and staff. The District schools are spread across approximately 40 miles and include students from many rural areas in the county.

The District has a budget of over \$83 million and is committed to provide a quality education in a safe and healthy learning environment with opportunities for all students to experience success.

“Aerohive’s HiveManager Online is one of the easiest systems I’ve worked with, making it painless to log in and set up an SSID. If I can do it, anyone can. The advantage to Aerohive is you are able to architect your network at any level, from the simple to the very complex and sophisticated to be as robust as your needs demand.”

—Ross Randall

Director of Technology, Lamar County School District

The Challenge

The District had implemented Cisco Wi-Fi over seven years ago, but the solution at the time was built out for convenience rather than capacity. At the time, Director of Technology Ross Randall notes there was barely one device per 20 or 30 kids, and as more time went on, the need for density and a reliable BYOD solution was imperative. “Now cable has greatly diminished, and students have at least one device, if not two or three. The majority of computers are now wireless, and science and learning labs are equipped with wireless technology. All of these factors directed us to evaluate our network needs and we quickly realized it was necessary to move away from the controller in order to advance in the direction we wanted to go,” explains Randall.

While the Cisco solution at the time was manageable, the District needed to evaluate new solutions as its needs changed, requiring greater capacity and simplified network management. A new wireless solution needed to be scalable as the District continues to expand and as it adds users, devices and wireless functionality.

In addition, the wireless technology was outdated, slow and unreliable. The District is moving toward a 1:1 classroom environment, deploying over 1300 Chromebooks and 500 iPads in the last year across district schools. All district schools are heavy users of Google Classroom apps and a wireless solution needed to integrate well with these tools.

The Solution

With the assistance of local reseller Business Communications Inc., Lamar County School District evaluated Aruba, Cisco, Meraki and Xirrus, setting up a test lab to track speed and performance. Aerohive not only proved superior in speed, the District also was very impressed with the ease of management and the flexible and cost effective licensing model from Aerohive.

The District made the switch from Cisco last year, deploying Aerohive in all 15 schools and auxiliary buildings in the District, including its central office, nurses' clinic, a parent outreach facility and school bus mechanical shops.

LCSD chose Aerohive AP230 access points, and was one of the first Aerohive customers to deploy 802.11ac Gigabit Wi-Fi technology. The District chose 802.11ac access points in order to future-proof and adequately provision the entire wireless solution. Since LCSD purchased Chromebooks enabled with 802.11ac for its 1:1 deployment, and the access points had excellent price performance, this was a logical choice for the District. The District has set up multiple VLANs on the back end to segment traffic, primarily for security reasons. A separate SSID is also in place for older iPads being used at the school, which eliminated issues the older chip sets experienced with broad spectrum wireless features.

LCSD is using many enterprise features from Aerohive, including Social Login, which enables students to authenticate to the network via a Google account with a single sign on, saving time and creating efficiency for the IT team. Social Login is also used by guests after school is out for the day, allowing visitors to sign on with social media credentials, and also giving the District valuable analytics for how the network is used and providing Wi-Fi for members of the community without any access.

Bonjour Gateway enables teachers to easily use AirPlay for classroom presentations. The built in RADIUS server support on every Aerohive access point is a huge advantage for the District, ensuring reliability and performance with authentication via active directory, so even if one site goes down, the network still operates normally.

HiveManager Online is used for cloud-based network management. As Ross Randall, Director of Technology elaborates, "Aerohive's HiveManager Online is one of the easiest systems I've worked with, making it painless to log in and set up an SSID. If I can do it, anyone can. The advantage to Aerohive is you are able to architect your network at any level, from the simple to the very complex and sophisticated to be as robust as your needs demand."

The Results

Schools in the district now enjoy reliable Wi-Fi throughout all facilities, and teachers can now take advantage of many digital learning tools, including Google Classroom, used extensively in all schools. In addition, the District is poised to embrace Gigabit Wi-Fi and take advantage of technology in years to come, as well as have network architecture in place to accommodate BYOD and 1:1 initiatives.

Administrators and teachers can now take advantage of other wireless applications, including accessing software for entering grades, attendance, teacher evaluations and student registration. Administrators now use the Feedback app on iPads to record evaluations directly in the classroom over the network.

Unlike the previous network solution, the network management is considerably superior, with a simple interface allowing the IT team and others to easily manage and monitor the network. The interoperability of the Aerohive solution has been instrumental in moving many paper-based operations to digital format.

School bus mechanical shops are now able to access the wireless network, communicating over email and using wireless scanning tools for bus maintenance. As the school district expands, there is a large amount of construction and temporary trailers installed for various functions. Outdoor access points are in place to function as if there were fiber between buildings. LCSD has found the range of the outdoor access points to be exceptional and has allowed the District to continue seamless operations.

Customer service and support have exceeded expectations for the District. As Randall states, "Lamar County School District was not just sold a product and left on our own. When you make a significant technology investment, it removes a lot of pressure from the IT team when you have a solution partner that is responsive and engaged. As one of the first Aerohive customers to use 802.11ac access points, we took on some risk, but the rewards have been outstanding and far outweighed any hiccups we encountered. Having a partner like Aerohive to ensure everything is working on the back end is invaluable for our District."

Full Speed Ahead

Lamar County is the fastest growing district in the state of Mississippi and has already expanded the network to meet additional requirements. As LCSD continues to integrate wireless technology into classrooms and administrative operations, the District has a solution from Aerohive built for capacity and density, as well as next generation Gigabit Wi-Fi technologies. In the near future, the District plans to leverage additional features from Aerohive, as well as expand its network to outdoor areas and to additional locations.



Contact us today to learn how your organization can benefit from Aerohive wireless LAN architecture.

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