

## Batavia City School District enhances communications in every classroom



---

### Overview

---

■ **The Challenge**

*To take control of the school district phone system, to reduce phone costs, and to put phones in every classroom*

■ **The Solution**

*An IBM converged network phone system-Voice over IP implementation*

■ **The Benefit**

*Centralized manageability of phone system, lower cost of ownership, and greater capacity for communication*

The Batavia City School District is located in Batavia, a small city in the heart of Western New York. About 3,000 students attend the district's 5 schools, which include 3 elementary, 1 middle school, and 1 high school.

In early 2001, the Batavia City School District made a decision to overhaul its phone system. "Our goal was to drive down our phone costs and increase the number of phones in the district, which included putting them in every classroom," says Gary Johnston, director of information technology for the Batavia City School District. "The existing phone system only served office areas and was operated by the area public telephone company. Every phone call that the school district received went directly to the phone company's Centrex system. From there, it was routed to the appropriate school building," explains Johnston.

He notes that this method was expensive and unexpandable, "We knew that if we stayed with this system, we wouldn't be able to afford to put phones in every classroom, something we really felt was necessary." Johnston explains that Batavia understood it needed to stop depending on the telephone company and establish its own phone system that would allow it to do all of its own phone switching.

### **Selecting a systems plan**

After reviewing different phone system options, Batavia decided to adapt a voice over IP system. According to Johnston, Batavia chose an IP system because it already had Cisco networking equipment and category five lines in place for data operation, and with an IP system, the same wire that carries the computer signal also carries the phone signal.

Although it already had Cisco as its equipment vendor, Batavia sought the services of IBM, a global partner of Cisco, to help design and engineer its new phone system. "IBM was involved in helping us decide what kinds of things we wanted to change in our equipment. We were able to trade much of our older stuff in exchange for new equipment while keeping our maintenance costs the same. This was really a great deal for us," says Johnston.

In March 2001, the planning process began. Johnston indicates that an IBM technical representative came to Batavia and worked very closely with the district's system analyst. "The two of them worked together to develop a plan where all our needs were met," he says, "after the planning was complete IBM provided highly skilled technical people who configured and programmed the Cisco equipment."

### **Opportunities for communication**

The installation of the phones began in Batavia office buildings in August of 2001. By March 2002, Johnston says that all classrooms will have working phone service. By placing phones in classrooms, Johnston says, "our intention is to take advantage of what educational research says is important: The stronger the relationships between school and home, the better the student will do academically. Therefore, it's very important that we as a school district provide communication tools for our teachers."

According to Johnston, standard phones were selected for the Batavia classrooms. In addition to being connected to an internal school network, the phone will be able to make calls outside of the school including long distance. Teachers will be provided with an account code that makes them responsible for the expense and they'll have to pay the cost of the call if it is of a personal nature.

In an attempt to preserve instructional integrity, Johnston says, "we've programmed the phones so that they will not be able to receive direct calls from outside the school network. We want to make sure class time isn't interrupted unnecessarily and we've asked teachers to think before they use their telephones to call one another so they're not indiscriminately disrupting a class."

*"It's very important that we as a school district provide communication tools for our teachers."*

*Gary Johnston, director of information technology for the Batavia Central School District*



With the new phone system, all teachers and support staff will also have access to their own personal voice mail. "Members of the faculty can give out their own personal voice mail number to parents and this way, they're able to be reached directly, 24 hours a day seven days a week without interrupting the classroom," notes Johnston. The system is set up so teachers are able to pick up their voice mail at any location, any time.

Johnston also explains that each classroom has a mobile presentation cart set up with a computer and a 30-inch television monitor that teachers can use to show programs during class time from CNN, PBS, and the History Channel, further utilizing the Cisco electronics and existing data cabling.

### **Lessons learned**

Johnston asserts that Batavia's most recent technology endeavor has taught him that careful project planning is imperative. "You can never do enough planning," he says. However, he indicates that it is also essential to select an experienced technology partner who will orchestrate the project. "When you're a novice at a particular technology, you're consulting partners are very important. You need to bring in the experience of a capable entity because if you don't know about something, it is impossible to plan without significant guidance.

"With our project, we knew how many phones we wanted and generally how we wanted the system to work, however, that's a long way from a real plan," he observes.

Johnston believes Batavia was very fortunate in its partnership with IBM. "We found IBM to be very helpful. They were aggressive in pricing equipment and services and they were able to bring knowledgeable people in to help us reach our goals. They were also very interested in making sure the project was successful for us. They've been extremely accessible and attentive to our needs," he continues.

"Overall, we feel that we've had quite a successful experience with IBM. We were able to dramatically increase the number of people who have access to phones and decrease our phone costs, which is exactly what we set out to do," concludes Johnston.

### **Find out more**

To learn more about other IBM offerings, please visit our Web site at [ibm.com/solutions/education](http://ibm.com/solutions/education).

For further details about Batavia City School District, please visit [www.bataviacsd.org](http://www.bataviacsd.org).



© Copyright IBM Corporation 2002

IBM Corporation  
8050 Congress Avenue  
Boca Raton, FL 33487  
U.S.A.

Printed in the United States of America  
2-02  
All Rights Reserved.

IBM and the IBM logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation in the United States, other countries, or both.

Other company, product and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others.

References in this publication to IBM products or services do not imply that IBM intends to make them available in all countries in which IBM operates.