



FAST FACTS:

- 29,000 students
- 1,400 classrooms
- 55 school buildings spread across 500 square miles
- Calypso ezRoom 5100 and Classroom Microphone System
- Projector and screen

NEEDS:

- Near-total coverage for district classrooms, with a limited budget
- Easy configuration and operation
- Ability to harness the district's large audio/visual libraries across a fiber-optic network

RESULTS:

- Widespread classroom adoption
- Continued district-wide improvement on state standardized tests
- Improves classroom connectivity

The Wired Schoolhouse

Calypso Systems forges seamless, affordable audio/video connections and sound reinforcement across the vast Boulder Valley School District

Located in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) stretches from the peaks of the Continental Divide to the suburbs of Denver.

In 2006, the district passed a bonding referendum that included a sizable information technology (IT) allocation. The district used the money to construct a wide-area fiber network connecting every school building. With the additional bandwidth available district-wide, bond IT project manager Chad Zemer sought funds for additional investment in classroom audio/visual hardware.

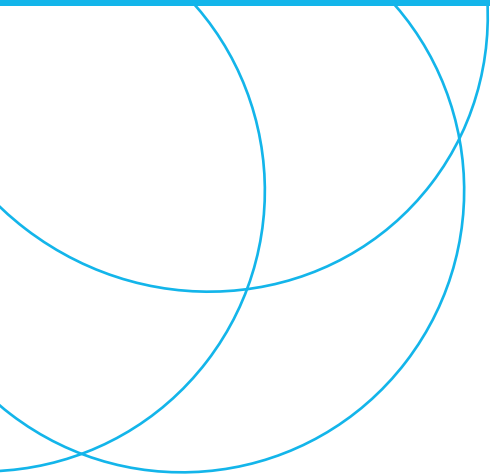
“With a robust fiber network and a new video archive system, we needed classroom-based technology to make the most of these new resources,” said Zemer. “So much multimedia instructional material is available today – learning isn’t all about pens and worksheets and books anymore. Now that we have the infrastructure to support this material in the classroom, we needed to find a solution we could deploy rapidly across the entire district.”

The Challenge

Without enough funding in the bond to provide for A/V control systems in every district classroom, Zemer tapped a separate fund that was previously earmarked for personal computer replacement. With a \$4 million budget and more than 1,400 classrooms needing equipment, Zemer needed a full-featured solution that was not only easy to configure and use, but was cost-effective enough to cover most of the district's needs.

After a competitive bidding process, Zemer and the Boulder Valley School District selected Calypso's ezRoom 5100 classroom A/V solution to harness the power of all its classroom technology tools effectively and efficiently. The ezRoom system delivers fully integrated device control, hardware and software user interfaces, remote monitoring, audio amplification, multimedia wall plates, projector mounting, ceiling mounted speakers, and connectors, wires and cables needed to connect classrooms district-wide.

“Our goal isn't technology for technology's sake,” Zemer said. “It's to address inequities in the classroom and create an environment in which all students can see and hear what's being taught. We felt that Calypso was the best technology partner to help us accomplish that goal.”



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The Solution

Zemer, who wasn't even aware of Calypso at the beginning of the bidding process, grew frustrated by over-budget bids that would have only equipped half the district's classrooms with control systems. When a colleague suggested Calypso, he was initially skeptical about a solution that promised to deliver all the functionality of more expensive systems at a fraction of the cost.

“Fortunately, the rest of our IT department had heard good things about Calypso, so I contacted the company directly and, within days, we had scheduled a one-off installation to see how their system performed,” Zemer said. “After putting Calypso head-to-head with a more expensive competitor, we realized that Calypso's solution actually exceeded our needs at a much lower price.”

Because of the cost advantage, Zemer is now able to equip nearly 90 percent of the district's classrooms with Calypso's ezRoom 5100 solution without compromising performance. The ezRoom system allows teachers to manage each piece of hardware easily through a Web-based interface or wall-mounted control panel.

The Process

After extensive field-testing by some of the district's most critical IT decision-makers, feedback on the Calypso ezRoom system was uniformly positive. Teachers, building administrators and district officials all agreed that, once fully implemented, the Calypso solution would expand learning capabilities in the classroom. As installation progressed, Zemer worked closely with Calypso technology experts as well as third-party integrators to manage the process.

“Calypso is always quick to respond to my questions, working closely with our local installer to get our systems up and running quickly, with a minimum of troubleshooting,” Zemer said. “Every building represents a different set of circumstances, with a wide range of physical environments and software capabilities, but Calypso is eager to work with us to solve front-end delivery and back-end technical questions before they become problems.”

The Result

As part of the district's classroom technology initiative, every classroom and large meeting space – such as media centers – in each of the district's 51 buildings will be equipped with built-in projectors, wall-mounted A/V input jacks and drop-down screens.

In a district that is already considered “tech savvy,” the advantages to having integrated classroom A/V controls may not be obvious. Boulder Valley already enjoys some of the highest Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) test results in the state but, according to Zemer, there's always room for improvement.

“Even if you take high-tech learning out of the equation and you consider something as simple as audio enhancement in the classroom, there's typically a 40 percent higher retention rate in classrooms with microphones,” Zemer said. “There is no doubt that we can do better, whether it's helping to bridge achievement gaps for under-performing students, or improving on our already excellent CSAP scores. The Calypso solutions in the classroom will be a catalyst for such improvement.”

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For more information:

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