



St. Michael-Albertville School District Facts:

- Twin Cities suburb
- 5,000 students
- 315 classrooms
- 7 schools
- Classroom technology: projector, interactive whiteboard, computers, wireless microphones, integrated control system

Calypso Systems' Solution:

- Project scope: 150 classrooms in five schools
- Calypso products specified:
 - ezRoom-1000 Classroom Bundle
 - Wireless Classroom Microphone
 - Wall-Mounted Button Controller

Results

- Hassle-free installation and start-up
- Streamlined technology use by teachers
- Increased student participation
- Enhanced interactive lessons
- Greater overall use of technology in the classroom

Reading, Writing and Technology

Calypso Systems brings seamless technology integration and management to St. Michael-Albertville School District classrooms

Located northwest of Minneapolis, the St. Michael – Albertville (STMA) School District is not unlike school districts nationwide – eager to bring instructional technology into the classroom, but at the same time somewhat intimidated by the prospect.

While the promise of classroom technology offers great advantages, for many teachers it often seems like more of an inconvenience than a resource. Using technology to shape lesson plans is important to many, but the time it takes to manage the different tools occasionally becomes a challenge.

Though many districts like STMA have projectors, interactive whiteboards and sound amplification systems, these tools don't always realize their full potential, partly because the products were not designed to work as an integrated system. As a result, teachers' usage of instructional technology tools is compromised.

At STMA, the district's technology team was quick to recognize that success required eliminating the disconnect between the technology and teachers. With a \$2 million classroom technology project underway across the district, STMA wouldn't be measuring success by what technology they've installed, but rather by how teachers are using the technology in their daily lessons.

"Teachers and tech directors need to concentrate on the learning environment, not the myriad of potential technical issues," said Wayne Hoistad,

STMA's director of technology. "Technology should be an extension of the teacher and success should be measured by the teacher's ability to seamlessly integrate technology into the lessons."

Taking into account teachers' needs and comfort level, Hoistad developed a technology plan around two principles: 1) the solution had to be easy for teachers to use; and 2) it had to provide the power to harness all of the technology tools available in a seamless manner.

With those goals in mind, STMA determined that a critical factor would be bringing together the various technology elements – from interactive whiteboards to microphones, projectors and computers – through a common control and management platform.

The solution STMA selected was Calypso Systems' ezRoom Classroom Bundle. The ezRoom solution provides everything districts need to build, manage and use "21st Century Classrooms." Virtually invisible to the teachers and students, the Calypso system would empower the teachers with technology rather than hinder.

CHALLENGE:

As the district grew over the years, so did its investment in technology. The district has invested more than \$10 million over ten years in classroom technology by incorporating networks, servers, computers, software, printers, scanners, copiers, TVs and VCRs, and, more recently, projectors, sound systems and interactive whiteboards.

**THE ezROOM-1000 WITH A PROJECTOR
AND INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD HELPS
ST. MICHAEL-ALBERTVILLE TEACHERS
BRING LESSON PLANS TO LIFE**

In 2004, under the direction of Hoistad, the district took a major step toward bringing technology into daily lesson plans by pursuing a pilot program: equipping 25 classrooms in several schools with projectors and SMART Boards.

Fieldstone Elementary opened in 2007, and based on the lessons learned in the pilot program the district equipped the facility with SMART Boards, projectors, new sound systems and integrated media control systems. By 2008, STMA had been actively incorporating technology in the classrooms and the district was beginning to realize the importance of integration as they prepared to install new systems in 150 classrooms.

It was clear that the district needed a sophisticated yet easy to use control solution with multiple inputs for audio, video and microphone that allowed teachers to toggle from one media input to another in a seamless manner.

SOLUTION:

For STMA, affordability, ease of use, and flexibility in programming and expansion were the driving decision-making criteria. After testing a separate system in Fieldstone Elementary that failed to meet the district's needs, Hoistad and his team wanted a solution with a proven track record.

"Calypso Systems immediately caught my attention because of its cost-effective price," said Hoistad. "After doing some research, we discovered that Calypso's products met the district's other needs by being flexible and easy to use and had a proven track record in other schools."

"In the end, the success of a project like this is measured by how often the technology is used by teachers to improve their instruction and ultimately student achievement."

—Wayne Hoistad

A complete pre-assembled solution, Calypso's ezRoom-1000 Classroom Bundle addresses the evolving technology needs of K-12 classrooms by bringing together state-of-the-art control, interface, audio and connectivity products quickly, reliably and cost effectively.

With the addition of a projector, screen and A/V source devices,

the ezRoom provides the tools necessary to achieve a "21st Century Classroom" environment. And as STMA brings new technologies and systems into its schools, ezRoom's open-architecture platform allows for easy integration and expansion.

In the summer of 2008, the district equipped a total of 150 classrooms with Calypso Systems' ezRoom-1000 Classroom Bundle and Wireless Classroom Microphone.

Before the implementation began, Hoistad was concerned about having to install the systems in so many classrooms in such a short amount of time – 150 classrooms in just three months, to be exact.

"The packaged aspect of the ezRoom made installation a breeze, so the installer didn't have to waste time dealing with cumbersome wiring," said Hoistad. "Once in place and ready to be tested, everything with the ezRooms

went smoothly with very few bugs to work out. Anytime we encountered any sort of issue with the products, Calypso always provided a solution."

RESULTS:

For the teachers, the ezRoom bundle is an invisible component – both physically and functionally. Secured neatly above the projector, the box

containing most of the ezRoom's working parts integrates with the other technologies out of sight from the teacher and the students.

In terms of functionality, the things that the ezRoom can do are "invisible" as well. The integration of the existing technologies provided by the ezRoom bundle is so seamless that many teachers cannot distinguish where one technology tool



ends and the next begins. The solution also allows teachers to do on a regular basis things that previously were too time-consuming.

Calypso's Wireless Classroom Microphone was also an integral part of the technology upgrade and now acts as an extension of the teachers. Used by both teachers and students, it allows teachers to be heard over classroom chatter and allows students to speak up and participate during group activities.

As the glue that holds the pieces together and drives the easy integration of instructional technology in the classroom, Calypso Systems' ezRoom-1000 Classroom Bundle and Wireless Classroom Microphone have provided the return on investment that the STMA district wanted.

"In the end, the success of a project like this is measured by how often the technology is used by teachers to improve their instruction and ultimately student achievement," said Hoistad. "In our district, the teachers now use technology to shape lesson plans everyday."

For more information on Calypso Systems, please visit www.calypsosystems.com.