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Bryan Turner - Director of Information Technology

Company:

Trinity-Pawling School

Industry:

Education

Website:

www.trinitypawling.org

Location:

New York, U.S.A

How Trinity-Pawling School is improving campus-life with a better, flexible WiFi Solution

SUMMARY

One of North America's leading independent schools for boys has furthered its commitment to providing its students with the best possible campus experience by investing in a high-bandwidth, secure, and flexible WiFi solution from NETGEAR. Bonus benefits include reduced costs, simple management, and a flexible, scalable platform for the future.

BACKGROUND

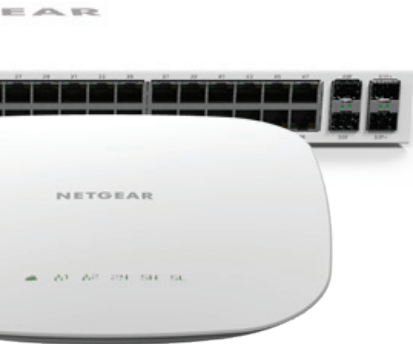
Founded in 1907, Trinity-Pawling School is an all-boys college preparatory school located in Pawling, NY, 60 miles North of New York City. The dynamic learning environment at Trinity-Pawling emphasizes innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and experiential learning. The use of technology is integral to the School's commitment to providing a state-of-the-art campus experience for the entire community.

THE CHALLENGE

When Bryan Turner joined as Director of Information Technology in 2018, it was clear to him that improving WiFi across the campus was going to be an on-going effort. On a normal school day, there are approximately 500 users, with a growing volume of devices and network traffic, which will only continue to expand. The top priority was getting better WiFi in the boys' dormitories.

Says Bryan, "WiFi is needed for both homework and downtime. We are a pioneer of project-based learning, so the boys are always building and creating different projects, uploading to cloud and local storage. It is a very hands-on approach to learning. When they are not working, it is important the boys have relaxation time, so we need to be able to support streaming entertainment, such as games and movies."

Existing WiFi access had limitations. "The buildings are solid brick and steel, so wireless penetration is difficult and the School's WiFi network only reached communal areas. The boys were allowed to bring in their home routers, but having lots of those in one area caused signal saturation, was challenging to manage, and could lead to problems. Clearly, we needed to find a better way to provide WiFi to the dormitories."





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Bryan Turner - Director of Information Technology

SOLUTION

Bryan was already aware of NETGEAR business-grade products from his consultancy days. “NETGEAR products are rock solid. They have great business products at a great price point (half the price of comparable systems). Plus, the support is excellent, I can speak to an engineer quickly and get answers.”

Bryan waited for the launch of NETGEAR WAC540 access points, which have the option of being connected via cables to the NETGEAR GC752XP switches, or deployed as a wire-free mesh network. For the time being, Bryan has chosen the wired approach, but adds, “We may well use mesh in the future, especially for places where getting a cable to will be difficult. The WAC540s give us that future-proof flexibility.”

RESULTS

Bryan also found that due to the capacity of the WAC540 design, he needed half the number of access points he had expected. Roll-out one dormitory at a time of approximately 50 WAC540s and 14 NETGEAR GC752XP switches began in Spring 2019. By the start of the Fall 2019 term when the boys returned to the School, every dorm had new WiFi.

“Setting up each access point was easy: the access point grabs all the information it needs, finds devices and it’s ready to go. It’s almost zero touch: 15 minutes and it is done. The switches also take up less than 30 minutes to set-up,” Bryan says. “When we need to do firmware updates or changes, it is a fraction of the time it would be with some other systems. That adds up to a lot of saved time.”

While Bryan’s team found the installation simple, when they did come across any issues, they called on NETGEAR support. “The NETGEAR engineering support team has been phenomenal. They have gone above and beyond to respond to our requests.”

NETGEAR’s Insight cloud portal provides the School with centralized management of the new access points and switches. “Insight gives us one pane of glass to see what AP users are connected to, monitor network traffic and quickly identify any issues.” Also, the simple Insight interface means that it is easy for other team members to administer WiFi, rather than relying solely on Bryan.

A further benefit of the new WiFi installation is security, including the ability to run multiple but entirely separate WiFi networks over the same equipment, and to close down WiFi out-of-hours. “We provide guest Internet access to parents, then turn that off when it is not needed. We also switch off WiFi at night to encourage students to have proper sleep.”

NEXT STEPS

Moving ahead, the School will progressively replace its existing network with NETGEAR equipment. For instance, two NETGEAR M4300-96X 10Gb switches will be soon replacing the existing core network. For WiFi deployment, the Art Center is next on the list to be upgraded to NETGEAR, followed by other parts of the campus step-by-step, still benefiting from Insight single pane of glass remote management.

In the meantime, has the new WiFi met the expectations of its users? “A lot of the students have commented on how much easier it is to get connected now,” says Bryan, who concludes, “We now have a flexible and cost-effective platform that will grow as we need it to, with great support and all the performance we require. Providing a great experience on campus is integral to our community, whether that is for students, faculty or guests, and these days, that needs to include great WiFi.”