

CASE STUDY

FORT LEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Eastern DataComm helps Fort Lee Public Schools replace a 25-year-old PBX with a state-of-the-art ShoreTel system — and save hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Fort Lee Public Schools serves about 3,600 K-12 students in Fort Lee, N.J., a suburban community situated on the Hudson River. The district's sports teams are known as the Bridgemen because of the community's strong link with the George Washington Bridge. The bridge crosses the Hudson River, connecting Fort Lee to Manhattan.

When Paul Saxton became superintendent of Fort Lee Public Schools in 2013, he found that the district was struggling with another form of connectivity — voice communications. The district's phone system was going on 25 years old and was at risk for failure.

"It needed to be replaced, so I immediately looked into implementing a ShoreTel Unified Communications system," he said. "I had selected the ShoreTel platform in another school district where I was superintendent for about 11 and a half years. I'm very sold on the ShoreTel technology and knew that it would be a great fit for Fort Lee."

Eastern DataComm was the ideal partner to design and implement the system. The Hackensack, N.J.-based firm has completed hundreds of ShoreTel installations and provides comprehensive support with a 95-percent satisfaction rating.

"They came in and met with all the key administrators, met with the technology staff, and made sure that they were totally familiar with our environment and operating requirements," Saxton said. "That gave them the ability to go out and do the turnkey implementation in each of our buildings.

"Eastern DataComm upgraded our network infrastructure as needed and performed a telecommunications analysis which saved us a significant amount of money. It has been a very beneficial relationship."

More Features and Flexibility

Saxton says the ShoreTel Unified Communications system is ideal for schools because it's easy to use, simple to administer and maintain, and highly reliable. It's also a lot more flexible than older phone system technology.

Solution Summary

- Eastern DataComm took time to understand the needs of Fort Lee Public Schools and design and implement a state-of-the-art ShoreTel Unified Communications system.
- Consulting engagement uncovered opportunities to eliminate unneeded phone lines — at a savings of \$4,000 per month over 60 months.
- Eastern DataComm helped Fort Lee switch telecommunications carriers, and receive about \$350,000 toward the purchase of new phone system equipment.
- The ShoreTel system enabled the district to centralize its auto-attendant, further reducing costs and increasing productivity.
- Emergency notification system and tie-in with the district's intercom system enhances school safety.
- ShoreTel Mobility solution gives teachers and staff the flexibility to use their mobile devices as desk phones.





"The equipment itself is very compact, not bulky, and it has a distributed design that enables us to connect all our locations in a single, unified system. It's so much better than the previous equipment, which had huge processing centers that made it impossible to move things around."

An immediate benefit of the ShoreTel system was the ability to condense and centralize the district's auto-attendant in the central office. Previously, auto-attendant functionality was provided by obsolete equipment located in several different areas.

"Centralizing the auto-attendant has boosted the efficiency of our operations and saved our staff a lot of time. It also provides cost savings by eliminating a lot of unnecessary equipment," said Saxton.

If someone dials 911 from the ShoreTel system, key administrators are notified. The system also links with the schools' intercom systems so that emergency messages can be pushed out to any room, location or the entire system.

In essence, the ShoreTel solution integrates once-disparate systems and features into a unified whole. It even enables

teachers and staff to use their smartphones in lieu of their desk phones.

"The ShoreTel Mobility solution gives everyone access to phone system features from any device," Saxton said. "You have total flexibility, total freedom."

Eastern DataComm trained the district's administrators on how to maintain and manage the ShoreTel system. They then went to each building and trained the staff and teachers at each grade level. The training was well received and has helped the district gain maximum value from the system.

Significant Cost Savings

Eastern DataComm's turnkey implementation extended beyond the phone system to upgrading network switches and cabling — everything needed to support the phone system. The Eastern DataComm team also helped Fort Lee Public Schools analyze its telecommunications services, and recommended alternatives that provided significant cost savings.

"Because our previous phone system was 25 years old, we had a lot of extra lines that were not even being used. We even had some old Centrex lines," said Saxton. "So when Eastern DataComm came in and performed their analysis, they eliminated quite a few lines. They also helped us switch to Windstream, one of the most cost-effective companies on the market, as our telecommunications carrier. All in all, they were able to save us about \$4,000 a month over a 60-month contract."

"Eastern DataComm also helped us take advantage of a program in which Windstream offsets some of the cost of our new equipment. That netted us about \$350,000 in savings."

Saxton knew that he wanted to replace his district's aging phone system with a state-of-the-art ShoreTel platform. But when he partnered with Eastern DataComm he got much more — turnkey implementation by experienced engineers and expert help navigating the various telecommunications options.

Today, the relationship continues, as Eastern DataComm remains on hand to give any other assistance as needed.

"We haven't had much need to call them for support so far but they are always very cordial," said Saxton. "It's always a pleasure to interact with them regarding any of the problems. And they definitely know what they are doing."