



Mobile County Public Schools Use Extron Collaboration Technology to Create Busy Learning Spaces

“One of the things I like about the Extron AV system is how quickly an instructor can enter a room and be teaching with the technology. They push ON, and everything fires up. Teachers tell me they love it.”

Tracye Mathis
Telecommunications/Web Manager
Mobile County Public School System

Mobile County Public School System – MCPSS – in Alabama is repurposing outdated computer labs, libraries, and media centers into heavily used collaboration spaces equipped with modern AV technology.

Challenge

Teaching pedagogy is shifting away from lecture to more collaborative and cooperative learning. This has created a need for collaborative spaces that allow small groups of students to meet and exchange ideas. Telecommunications/Web Manager Tracye Mathis is one of the driving forces behind creation of collaboration spaces at MCPSS schools. She notes, “Students learn differently these days. We’re teaching them how to work together, building on each other’s strengths, because that’s how work gets done today.” After seeing empty classrooms during a walk-through at a middle school five years ago, Mathis concluded that underused library, media center, and computer lab facilities would be ideal locations for collaboration spaces. She adds, “Reference materials moving online and trends away from rows of students working independently has opened up room for us to create spaces that better serve students and faculty.”



Students display their content by simply pushing the Share button on their TeamWork Show Me cable.

Solution

MCPSS worked with system integrator Information Transport Solutions, Inc. to design and install AV systems in the new spaces. Typical collaboration rooms are comprised of several pods, each seating up to seven students around a table. Each pod has a 48-inch flat panel display at the head of the table and an Extron TeamWork® Collaboration System. Students seated around the table connect their laptops or other BYOD devices to the TeamWork system via HDMI Show Me® cables. When a student wants to share their screen with the group, they press the Share button on the cable and their content is presented on the pod's display. As the discussion continues, other students around the table can press their Share button to illustrate their point. "The TeamWork systems support a free flow of ideas and conversation between students," says Mathis.

For group instruction, a 75-inch interactive flat panel display is mounted at the front of the room. An Extron TouchLink® Pro Touchpanel mounted next to this display is the primary AV control interface. It handles power on and off for the interactive and pod displays, source selection, and audio controls. When Mirror Mode is enabled at the TouchLink touchpanel, the teacher's content is shown on the main screen and all of the pod displays. When Mirror Mode is disabled, all pod displays are independent, and students are free to show their own content on the nearest pod display.

The system also includes the Extron ShareLink® Pro 1000 for sharing student content on the large interactive flat panel at the front of the room. Grade 8 History teacher Krystle Smith indicates, "If I see pod



The TouchLink control system handles power on/off, which content to show, and audio volume.

content I really like, we use ShareLink to project it on the main display so all students can see what great work looks like." Superior audio performance is provided by an Extron Mini Power Amplifier and FF 220T speakers. The speakers feature Extron patented Flat Field® Technology and extraordinarily wide dispersion to deliver consistent sound levels throughout the room for both voice and music reproduction.

Result

Currently, eighty percent of MCPSS' 89 schools have deployed collaboration spaces with the remainder expected to be deployed within the next two years. As collaboration spaces proliferate across the district, new uses have multiplied. They serve as standard classrooms, as gathering places for after school activities, and for tutoring. They also host faculty in-service meetings. According to Tracye Mathis, once teachers sit at a collaboration pod and see how simple it is to use, even skeptics say, "I want to do this!" Teacher Krystle Smith says, "Students are really excited about the AV technology in the collab labs. They love being able to see and share their work on the large screens, and it integrates our technology standards." Mathis adds, "One of the things I like about the Extron AV system is how quickly an instructor can enter a room and be teaching with the technology. They push ON, and everything fires up. Teachers tell me they love it."



ShareLink Pro 1000 allows great work to be shared wirelessly with the entire class.

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