



Vital Support Systems & Ankeny Community Schools:

An **A+** Partnership

The Ankeny Community School District is located just six miles from Des Moines. It is the 10th largest district in the state for student enrollment, and is also the fastest-growing school district. In 2010, the district is projected to serve more than 8,500 students and should easily break the 10,000-student mark in the 2015-2016 school year.



ANKENY
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

"We have a solid partnership with them and we know that as technology changes, they will always bring the latest and greatest solutions to the table."

~Paul Mahoney,
Ankeny Community Schools, Network Engineer

Not only is Ankeny Community School District surpassing growth projections, but it also boasts an outstanding reputation in the state for both athletic and academic achievement. Of the ten largest school districts in Iowa, it has the highest graduation rate of 97.4%.

But, great success and rapid growth doesn't come without its challenges. Ankeny Community Schools knew that technology

was a key to attracting and keeping students and teachers. In January of 2008, Vital Support Systems conducted a technology needs assessment for the district. Vital Support Systems, headquartered in Des Moines with 6 Midwest offices, is a leading provider of systems and network technology solutions.



"We were looking for a number of solutions when we approached Vital Support Systems," said Paul Mahoney, Ankeny Community Schools network engineer. "We were concerned about security, speed, reliability, efficiency, real-time access, and more.

Vital Support Systems brought knowledge, great partners and far-reaching resources to the table."

With that in mind, Ankeny Schools, Vital Support Systems and Cisco put together a plan that demonstrated how technology can improve education, create a more efficient, productive workforce and cut long-term operational costs. Some of their solutions over the past two years include:

- **Replaced the entire Network infrastructure** – This allowed cutting-edge industry leading technology to replace older legacy equipment. This provides a higher level of availability, reliability and speed. Users will have greater access to their network and critical applications.
- **Replaced the entire Wireless infrastructure** – Ankeny's previous system was spotty, unreliable and unable to handle

multiple wireless clients. The new system is robust, provides a consistent blanket of coverage, is managed by a centralized control system and will allow personal devices to access the Internet through a secure wireless network. Maximum student and teacher mobility was achieved.

- **Deployment of new phone system to all facilities** – This new system not only allowed the system to cut back on the number of individual phone lines in each building, but it also provided many technological advancements. Some of these advancements include: 4-digit dialing between phones, impromptu conference calling, voicemail for all staff, direct dialing and it will allow for future growth such as mass calling and paging.
- **New email system** – After a thorough evaluation, Ankeny Schools chose Microsoft Exchange as a new system. This new feature-rich system allows employees to access their calendar and email at any time. It also allows synchronization through other phones and mobile devices. Resource scheduling, meeting reminders, and staff calendars are now easy to use and access.
- **New website** – Ankeny re-designed their website in March of 2009. Some of the improvements made include course pages, daily news and announcements, online calendaring, an easy-to-use Student Information Center and other online resources.



As with any school system, staying below budget was a top priority for Ankeny Community Schools. “Cisco and Vital went the extra mile to stay within our budget, while still giving us top-of-

the-line solutions. Because of them, we were able to do more than we ever thought possible over a shorter amount of time,” said Mahoney.

Although Ankeny Schools knew that technology updates and cost were of major concern, student education and needs remained the district’s top priority. “To prepare our students for the 21st century, we need to have the tools and resources that engage the students,” said Dr. Bruce Kimpston, Assistant Superintendent of Organizational Development and Learning. “Technology can help our students become more active participants in the learning process. Further, technology is a way of life outside of school for many students. It’s a critical component to our curriculum and our future.”

How have the district’s teachers and staff adjusted to the new network upgrade and renewed emphasis on technology? “Staff has been receptive to the changes. They see the value in what we’re trying to do and have seen our reliability and performance improve dramatically. This upgrade has allowed us to have conversations about the future of technology in the classroom that would not have been possible before,” said Mahoney.

The future is bright for tomorrow’s Ankeny youth. The district continues to research new technology advancements. Future solutions could include:

- **Bring your own devices** – Students and teachers will be encouraged to bring their own laptops and mobile devices.
- **Parent & Teacher Notification System** – In case of an emergency, this system will deploy a text, e-mail and phone call at the press of a button.
- **IP Videoconferencing** – This would extend both the reach of the teachers and the depth of the curriculum through virtual field trips, connections to classrooms across the globe and more, while also enabling convenient professional development for teachers.
- **Server Virtualization** – Currently, Ankeny is migrating servers from physical to virtual and any new server installations will be virtualized. This will provide a redundant and resilient environment that ensures the availability of resources. It is also eco-friendly and cost-beneficial.
- **Online learning opportunities** – This includes anytime, anywhere access to files and applications, increased availability of technology resources and more opportunities for online learning.

The close relationship between Ankeny Community Schools, Vital Support Systems and Cisco will continue. “We have a solid partnership with them and we know that as technology changes, they will always bring the latest and greatest solutions to the table,” said Mahoney. Mahoney cited knowledge, resources, good response time, and a solid reputation as reasons for choosing Vital Support Systems. “In addition, Vital Support Systems allowed us great input into the design and implementation process. They were willing to learn about the educational system and what we needed to be successful in this learning environment.”

Jeff Sparling, Vital Support Systems CEO, echoes that same sentiment. “The solutions we provided make Ankeny Community Schools a state-of-the-art system. It’s great knowing the impact that our partnership will have on the future of education. The possibilities are virtually unlimited. ”

Keeping up with Ankeny’s growth, supporting the changing environment of education and security are still technology challenges within the school district. “With Vital Support Systems and Cisco, we feel confident we can meet those challenges head-on. Instead of being reactive, we’re becoming more proactive



– making sure we are always looking to the future. Our students, teachers and parents benefit from this new approach. It’s an exciting time in education and technology- and with planned improvements we will be leading the way here in Ankeny,” said Brad Johnson, Director of Technology.



Contact:
 Jeff Sparling, CEO
 Jeff.Sparling@vitalsite.com
 www.vitalsite.com