



Midland Independent School District (Texas) Works to Fight Child Obesity with Technology from Califone.

Issue

The annual National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently found that approximately one-third of U.S. children are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. This means that about 25 million U.S. children and adolescents are vulnerable to diseases associated with obesity, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Administrators at the Midland Independent School District in Midland, Texas, were concerned that the prevalence of childhood obesity was found to be even greater in Texas in 2004-2005 than the overall U.S. rates reported in the 2003-2004 NHANES. The new study found that 42 percent of Texas students were overweight or at risk for becoming overweight, with the percentage being much higher among minorities. The highest prevalence of obesity was found in Hispanic boys in all grades levels, Hispanic girls in fourth grade and African American girls in the fourth and eleventh grades.

With this concern in mind, district administrators decided to implement several programs to encourage healthy lifestyles among their 21,000 students, including CATCH: Coordinated Approach to Child Health and Kids in Action. In addition, they applied for and received the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) grant in 2005, which advocates that physical education improves the overall health of children, including self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, responsible behavior, and independence. The three-year grant provided the district with funds to purchase tools to increase movement exercises in and outside the classroom.

Implementation

As part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the PEP grant gives recipients the ability to expand and improve their physical education programs in order to make progress toward meeting state and federal standards. The first year, MISD administrators encouraged students to participate in movement exercises, and ultimately, initiated a Walk Across America campaign.

For the grant's second year, Gwen Smith, the PEP Grant Coordinator for the district, asked permission to combine the unused funds from the previous year with the second-year funds. Based on the strength of her proposal, the federal PEP grant directors approved her request. In reviewing wish lists her teachers had prepared earlier, she determined their number one wish was to purchase a portable sound system. Smith realized she would be able to accomplish this goal.



Implementation continued

“As a physical education teacher, you are constantly talking loudly, or even yelling, to provide direction to your students,” Smith explained. *“An amplification system allows our teachers to focus on instruction and the activity at hand, instead of trying to constantly catch the attention of students.”* Amplification would also ensure that students would be able to hear instructions better when engaged in outside activities.

Smith required that the product address her district’s needs, so in looking for a sound system, she researched products that would meet the following requirements:

- The system needs to be completely wireless (*microphone to the PA and loudspeaker to loudspeaker*)
- The speakers need to be able to be placed far apart from each other
- The product needs to be durable and safe for student use
- The speakers need to be easily transportable (*on wheels for daily use by teachers and for lock-up at night*)
- The sound should be clear in gyms with high ceilings
- The products need to be easy to use and easy to set-up by non-technology savvy users
- The speakers need to come with wireless microphones
- The products need to work outdoors, even in windy conditions
- And new or replacement equipment should be reasonably priced.

Ultimately, Smith and MISD administrators believed it was important to provide each elementary school with a sound system to help their physical education teachers conduct their lessons more efficiently, allowing more time to encourage their students to participate in movement activities and healthy living practices.



PowerPro™ PA916-A System

Results

“To find the right system, we conducted a lot of research – both online and through other teachers around Texas,” Smith said. “Califone products kept popping up when the issues of durability were discussed. I was thrilled when the district, city and grant team approved the product and the company accepted our bid. We were very appreciative of the PEP grant directors for allowing us to use the funds.”

MISD purchased a PowerPro™ (PA916-A) system from Califone International, Inc. through Troxell Communications (an authorized Califone dealer), for each of its 24 elementary schools. The package includes two speakers (one PowerPro master unit and a powered, wireless companion speaker), as well as wired and wireless microphones, and a tripod to serve the many needs of physical education teachers.

The PowerPro PA offers MISD an economical and flexible wireless system that delivers high-quality audio. The system easily serves up to 1,000 people and can reach up to 10,000 people with additional wireless companion speakers. A bonus to each school is that the companion speaker can be used as a stand-alone wireless PA, essentially giving each school two wireless speakers to use separately on a daily basis, and used together for larger events.

As the only portable sound system to offer wireless audio transmission from the master speaker to the companion speaker up to 300 feet, the PowerPro is a complete self-contained sound system on large wheels with two built-in wireless microphone receivers, a CD player, MP3 connection capabilities and a mixing panel. The unit also comes with a variable speed cassette recorder/player, which helps physical education teachers to differentiate their instruction, especially during dance lessons.

In addition, for school-wide presentations, student productions or parent meetings, the system can connect to two wired microphones and two external recording devices or audio sources, such as a VCR or DVD player, computer or interactive whiteboard.

“All of my teachers love the sound quality in the gym and can hardly wait to use them in the fall,” Smith said. “In fact, we have to keep reminding them that they can use their normal speaking voices because the sound carries so well.” She also appreciates that the volume turns all the way down when the power is turned off.

She and her team look forward to using their units during Walk Across America, on field days and for daily use in the gym. “The quality of the units are amazing,” Smith concluded. “Teachers think the new system is fantastic and the students are fascinated by it. We are looking into purchasing units for our secondary schools soon. Overall, we feel that our initial goals have been met – we are helping our students to live healthy lifestyles.”

