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Running the Fiber Marathon: SYSTIMAX® Solutions Builds on Long-term Partnership with Ambitious Garland Independent School District Project

The Garland Independent School District (GISD), serving a suburb of Dallas, Texas, encompasses 67 campuses and approximately 57,000 students. The school district also employs more than six thousand teachers, paraprofessionals and administrative staff. It may be a challenge to organize and educate in the midst of such high numbers, but the GISD recently faced its biggest obstacle yet: how to prepare its education, technology and Internet access for the advances of the 21st Century.

With the Internet and broadband playing an increasingly visible role in nationwide education, administrators in Garland wanted to make sure they utilized the latest technology for their students and teachers. Long gone are the dinosaur days of relying on chalkboards and overhead projectors to get a message across. Interactive lessons, streaming video and online-based homework have become commonplace across the country.

"The key to the entire upgrade is our incredible demand for broadband video content," said Jim Hysaw, executive administrator of technology for GISD. "The future for GISD is for teachers to be able to use video every day to give lessons in math, history and science. To accomplish this, we have to ensure we acquire the necessary bandwidth to not only make these applications possible but to ensure they operate smoothly, quickly and without any technical issues."

To make sure educators' needs were met, the GISD turned to a reliable and trusted partner, SYSTIMAX Solutions™. The pair has forged a solid working



relationship dating back to 1996. This time, 75 buildings would have to be interconnected across the district, meaning approximately 70 miles would have to be covered. In 2005, it's become increasingly important for a school district to maintain its own independent, fully owned private network. Garland wanted to have that sense of ownership and control, as they moved ahead with their new learning technology. GISD selected Elert & Associates as its consultant group on the project.

The fiber-ring utilizes SYSTIMAX® TeraSPEED™ singlemode zero waterpeak fiber which delivers approximately 50 percent additional bandwidth over traditional singlemode fiber. The fully redundant network provides a best-in-class design because of the dual feed to each school.

“With SYSTIMAX Solutions I never had to worry about wiring problems. They have the best installers, the best cabling solutions and the best technicians. They have exceeded my expectations in every way.”

Jim Hysaw, Executive Administrator of Technology for GISD

If one route to a school is cut, the second feed can compensate and keep the connection going. This gives Garland the reliability and effectiveness it was seeking for its state-of-the-art fiber-ring.

With the history between SYSTIMAX Solutions and the GISD, the decision to continue the partnership was obvious.

"With SYSTIMAX Solutions, I never ever have to worry about wiring problems," said Hysaw. "They have the best installers, the best cabling solutions and the best technicians. They have exceeded my expectations in every way. I also was very impressed with their 20-year Extended Product Warranty and Application Assurance Program. That gives me tremendous peace of mind as far as being prepared for the future as we promise to give the absolute best education technology to several generations of students over that time frame."

The school district already is looking to the future and what their new fiber network could mean for education. Standardized tests like the statewide TEKS could incorporate video content in the next few years, meaning GISD will easily be able to handle the necessary requirements. The increased demand for video also could allow more students to gain access to individual lesson plans designed especially for their needs, as well as centralized "cyber classes" taught district-wide.

That means thousands of students can gain the same benefits as those who actually are present in the same classroom, saving space and resources for Garland.

But the GISD's unique partnership with SYSTIMAX Solutions isn't just confined to a purchaser/vendor relationship. The two have been working together to help customize the new technology for educators' specific design needs. School administrators were able to work side-by-side with SYSTIMAX Solutions engineers to choose design elements for the fiber ring that will incorporate seamlessly into a newly planned data center, allowing them a measure of input and control rarely seen in projects of this size. GISD officials actually visited SYSTIMAX Solutions' labs in Richardson, Texas and were able to give their design suggestions and ideas first-hand.

"The schools have actually developed an open exchange of information with SYSTIMAX Solutions and will have a direct impact in the design of the project," said Felix Fayngersh, Senior Engineer with Elert & Associates, the end-to-end consultant of the GISD upgrade. "School officials feel like they're a part of the installation and design process, rather than a distant observer."

The new data center is expected to be fully installed by Summer 2006. The district-wide \$8 million, 70-mile fiber-ring project is expected to be ready for the start of the 2006 fall semester.

"Ours is a partnership that simply works flawlessly," said Hysaw. "As broadband technology continues to evolve rapidly, we will look to SYSTIMAX Solutions to help us evolve too. We'll work together side-by-side and continue to demand only the best for our students, teachers and administrators. Every single student and teacher in the district will benefit in the future from what we're doing today."

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