

North Ridgeville City Schools Provide Easy Virtual Classrooms with DTEN & Zoom

“DTEN is Rock Solid”

Interactive, easy, powerful, unique: these are the words Paul Hieronymus uses to describe DTEN. As technology director for the North Ridgeville City Schools, Paul shares how distance learning is expanding – and how Zoom and DTEN are helping to make it happen.

“DTEN is rock solid.” Paul Hieronymus summarizes his experience with DTEN in that one short sentence. And he possesses the expertise to back-up his assessment, saying “This is my 25th year in educational technology, now as Director of Technology at North Ridgeville City Schools.”

Even before COVID-19 accelerated interest in teaching via video conference, Paul predicted distance learning was ready to move to the next level. He notes, “When Zoom hit the market, you finally had that important piece in place for distance education.

With Zoom on the scene, and now DTEN coming onto the scene, all the pieces are coming together. Combined you make it easy, you make it successful – and distance learning is just going to continue expanding, continue growing.”

Enhanced Content, New Classes

This growth is exemplified at North Ridgeville City School. Paul continues, “We initially looked at distance education as primarily an enhancement to existing curriculum. We are using it for virtual field trips for instance, bringing in guest speakers from content providers such as museums and zoos.”



“But, with the success of the program, we are already looking at being able to bring in new courses, to enhance our course delivery options through remote instructors from other locations. We’re scheduled to start with American Sign Language and Chinese instruction, both to be delivered virtually to our classrooms. Utilizing DTEN equipment is part of that plan.”

When COVID-19 required schools to close, the North Ridge district pivoted to full e-learning – and with notable success. Paul quantifies, “We just recently polled our students and community family members to see how we were doing with virtual delivery of the content. We were happily surprised to see that we got an 87% approval rating from our families.”

Easy and Enthusiastic Reception from Staff

Paul recalls his reaction to his first DTEN D7 demo, “I saw how easy DTEN was for a classroom teacher. You get in front, teach very similar to the traditional classroom, and then also have the ability to enhance it, through content sharing with the device. Buying that first DTEN became a no-brainer for us.”

He continues, "Installation wasn't a challenge for us, I mean, it's pretty much plug-and-play right out of the box."

Teachers have also easily adapted. Paul shares a story of a high school instructor teaching Spanish to students at another location, "The teacher had not done much with distance learning in the past. But she immediately just jumped right in. She loved being able to connect, talk and simultaneously use the online DTEN whiteboard to share and mark-up content. And the students actively joined in with their Chromebooks."

He also notes recent free upgrades to the DTEN D7 firmware – including camera presets, auto framing and expanded camera angle – will appeal to the same teacher. "Our Spanish teacher is going to be so excited to have these. When she teaches, she is all over the place."

In fact, enthusiasm among teachers has helped lead to new video conferencing uses – and led to additional DTEN purchases. He explains, "One teacher would do it, be successful and tell her colleagues. Then they come to me and say, "I want to sign up for this as well."



A Win-Win for Teachers and Students

Continuing on with the value to educators and students: "Distance learning really helps in meeting state standards. It's a powerful way for classroom teachers to bring in experts and involve students. One teacher connected to a science museum in Indianapolis for instruction on the planets. The presenter was able to have the planets appear right next to him on the screen. He talked about the characteristics of each planet to help students meet a science standard. That is a win-win for our teachers and students."

"We also started doing classroom to classroom connections. Students did a book club, where they went through and talked about their favorite books with a classroom in a very rural area. The kids would introduce themselves, ask questions of each other, share reactions on the books. And it also led to discussions on the differences between our communities. We were enhancing the curriculum in a way that was exciting and also really powerful."

Paul notes other benefits as well, "On the financial end, there definitely is a cost savings with the ability to share instruction. Like with Chinese language instruction, because we're looking at one period. How do you hire somebody for a single period? Normally, if you're talking one period, it would be out the window."

Continued Growth in Distance Learning

In addition to his role as technology director, Paul is also the Vice Chair of the Ohio Distance Learning Association. From that vantage point, he provides additional insights on trends in distant learning, "Since working with Zoom and DTEN, we were seeing significantly more growth than over the previous several years. And that was before COVID-19."

He continues, "One thing we're really excited about in the State of Ohio is we're actually working on a clearinghouse project where we can have school districts across the State of Ohio list classes that they would like to make available for remote instruction."

"And I'm already hearing people say, 'I need a DTEN, I need a D7.'"