

## >> BellSouth Tools Fuel Learning for a Louisiana School District



Saint John the Baptist Parish Schools selects BellSouth® Metro Ethernet Service with premium features to power its next generation education plan.



*"I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library."*

Jorge Luis Borges.

If this Argentinean writer is correct, then the children of Saint John the Baptist Parish (SJPB) in Louisiana have a kind of heaven on earth. Their goal in 2004 was to read 250,000 books. Not a small feat for this school district consisting of 12 schools. By utilizing the full Renaissance Learning® program, the students read 289,000 books in 2004 and an astonishing 315,000 in 2005! The program offers a guided plan of grade level appropriate books with quizzes for the students to take online after reading each book. A student must make 85% or better on the quiz to receive credit for reading the book. Many of the classrooms and schools within the district have achieved Model Status through the program.

In addition to the reading program, SJPB school district incorporated several other technology driven tools into its educational excellence agenda. Some examples of these tools are:

- ▶ INTECH
- ▶ AZTEC Learning System
- ▶ Electronic Timecards
- ▶ Destination Math®
- ▶ Plato Polaris®
- ▶ United Streaming
- ▶ Homework Help
- ▶ Requisition System
- ▶ Grade Book System

With all of these tools available for the students, teachers and parents of the district, the expected problems have arisen: too many people trying to access high bandwidth tools at the same time and the need to find funding to support the network. School Superintendent Michael Coburn challenged the district's Technology Coordinator, Robert Brown, to find solutions for the schools' slow application access. Brown and his staff began by cataloging the needs and the goals for the network. With over 2,600 work stations in 12 schools, SJPB had a student computer ratio of 1 computer for every 2.6 students. Network traffic had to be prioritized giving the school system's voice over IP telephones and the reading program top priority. At peak times, the system had over 5 Gbps of traffic vying for just 3 Mbps of access. Fortunately Brown's staff had invested in Cat 5 Level 6 wiring throughout every school and the administrative offices when the wiring had to be upgraded a couple of years ago. This provided the foundation to support high bandwidth network access.

### At a Glance

- Priority applications
- Cost savings
- Accommodates growth

# DRAFT



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Robert Brown, Technology Coordinator, Saint John the Baptist Parish Schools

### Solutions Included:

- Increased bandwidth
- Prioritized traffic
- In-service upgrades

The school district published a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking solution ideas and bids for the much needed higher bandwidth access. The respondents included the local BellSouth team led by Major Account Manager Cindy Matranga. Matranga partnered with Bonnie Denson, BellSouth's Technical Branch Manager for Louisiana, to map out the schools' needs and design possible solutions. The district had two additional challenges: it is served by two phone companies, and it is split by the Mississippi River. Matranga and Denson engaged the expertise from local Network Engineering staff all the way to the company's chief Ethernet network architect. Between them, they created five possible network solutions. Sherry Keenze, BellSouth Network Sales Engineer (NSE), was able to work with the other local phone company serving the parish to carve out a collaborative set of solutions and packaged pricing for the parish schools.

According to SJBPs Robert Brown, "The BellSouth team listened to us and worked to thoroughly understand our needs better than any other RFP respondent. Their solutions were all viable options but we selected a solution using BellSouth Metro Ethernet Service." The solution included premium features to support the need to prioritize traffic. It allows for bursting at peak periods and can carry advanced applications such as streaming video. The design gives each school site 100 Mbps of bandwidth back to the administration offices. The main office has a Gigabit port to allow for a tremendous amount of traffic to be served from several schools simultaneously.

To fund this new network solution, the school district has applied for and was awarded

funds from the Universal Service Fund (USF) School and Library program, often referred to as the "E-Rate program," and several grants. BellSouth also offered an improved cash flow solution here. The phone bill for this new service will only reflect the school district's out-of-pocket portion of the bill, which is less than 20% of the total. The remainder of the bill is sent directly to the Universal Service Administrative Company's E-Rate program for payment. This prevents the



school district from having to allocate funds to pay the bill and wait for reimbursement. The schools can enjoy a less restricted cash flow as a result.

As a standard practice, Brown and his staff have selected a Priority One on-premise equipment solution. This saves money for SJBPs by lowering overall operational costs. The fact BellSouth uses only carrier-class, standards-based equipment to support

its network services like Metro Ethernet, had Brown's respect. The importance of using standards based equipment is fully demonstrated by this solution. While BellSouth's Metro Ethernet service with premium features is provisioned over Cisco 7609 equipment, the school district phones and servers are manufactured by other tier one companies. The reason the equipment interoperates well is the fact they are all based on the same engineering standards.

Since the Metro Ethernet service does not require sophisticated special equipment at the school sites, the district is able to eliminate costly routers from the network configuration.

The school district's ability to fund this array of technology has come from cost containment and from finding every available funding resource. Costs were lowered by incorporating a voice over IP (VoIP) phone system. The new phone system saves the

district about one quarter of a million dollars per year through long distance and switching cost savings. Another source of total operational cost savings is realized by centralizing the district's many applications. Deploying applications at each school site would create administrative complexities and additional costs. The Metro Ethernet solution helps to allow for centralization of the applications and because of its ability to prioritize traffic, the network can also carry VoIP traffic as well.

During the peak network hours of 10 AM to 1 PM, the network can also carry the load of activity generated by access to the various teaching tools such as streaming video and the Renaissance Learning program. The Metro Ethernet network is designed to allow for temporary bursts in data traffic eliminating the need for purchasing bandwidth to match the maximum burst rate. Time card processing, requisition and budget controls along with grant reconciliation are additional ways the school district has minimized abuse and administrative time spent in non-educational activities. All of these tools add up to better performing schools and higher scholastic achievements for the students and teachers in the SJBPs school district.

In the long run, the real beneficiaries of this extraordinary integration of educational tools, funding resourcefulness and technological savvy are the citizens of the parish. Mary Ellen Chase, famed educator and children's book writer said, "There is no substitute for books in the life of a child." For providing that environment of learning, there is no substitute for the leadership demonstrated by Michael Coburn and Robert Brown. The Louisiana BellSouth team is proud to be their partner.

## About Saint John the Baptist Parish School System

The parish is ideally located on the Mississippi River thirty-five miles north of New Orleans. The school system, in partnership with the entire community, is dedicated to providing a quality education in a safe, inviting environment so that all students learn and become successful, responsible citizens. The district is comprised of 12 schools and serves the children of the entire population of approximately 45,000. More information about SJBP can be found at [www.stjohn.k12.la.us](http://www.stjohn.k12.la.us)

## About Cisco Systems

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## About BellSouth Corporation

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**To learn more about BellSouth® Metro Ethernet Service, please contact your BellSouth Account Representative or visit us online at [www.bellsouth.com/business](http://www.bellsouth.com/business)**

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