



Forney Independent School District

Since the turn of the century in 2000, the Forney Independent School District has been ranked as one of the fastest-growing school districts in the State of Texas. Located approximately 20 miles east of Dallas, Forney ISD is recognized as one of the most progressive and successful school districts in the area. With technology driving educational advancements, Forney ISD chose to build its wireless network with Bluesocket.

The Forney Independent School District Board of Trustees is dedicated to ensuring that the district has all of the tools and resources available to them so that students receive the best education possible. To support their student laptop initiative, the district deployed Bluesocket's high-performance BlueSecure™ Controllers and award winning 802.11n 1800 series BlueSecure™ Access Points.

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The Forney Independent School District is rich in history and tradition. For nearly 110 years the district has provided the children of Forney with a top quality education and an encouraging learning environment that allows students in Forney ISD the opportunity to grow and develop into successful young adults.

The Texas school district serves over 7,600 students located in fourteen schools composed of grades K-12. To accommodate the continued growth in the district, Forney ISD opened two new elementary schools and expanded the one middle school in the district into two middle schools to start the 2008-2009 school year. In 2009, Forney ISD opened a second high school.

The Forney community places tremendous value on the leveraging the most current technologies in the curriculum. In November 2006, funding was approved for a student notebook initiative, tagged the "E-book" program. The initiative began as a pilot with 5th and 6th grade students at one of the district's elementary schools before expanding to the middle schools in 2008. The program will rollout to high school students for the 2009-2010 school year and all students in the 5th and 6th grade will receive notebooks during the 2010-2011 school year.

The ultimate goal of the E-book program is to provide every student in grades 5-12 with a notebook computer, giving students the opportunity to learn through the latest technology available.

The Challenge for Forney ISD

Through the E-book program more than 6,000 students in grades 5-12 receive an

802.11n-enabled notebook pre-loaded with curriculum-specific course materials including electronic text books, homework assignments and software for in-class testing.

When the E-book program first launched the district had in place a basic wireless network of third-party Access Points. IT administrators found it challenging to manage the Access Points without a central management system. Additionally, they did not have the ability to track user activity or location, creating a security risk for the network.

With the success and continued growth of the E-Book program, the District recognized the need for advanced network management capabilities and user location tracking. They continue to add Access Points as new schools are brought into the program and require fast, reliable and automatic network access. As the program expands across the District, IT administrators need an efficient and effective way to administer the technology and monitor network usage. Included in Forney ISD's criteria for a wireless solution is a network able to handle a high volume of simultaneous logins. This is necessary to accommodate multiple classes starting at the same time with students requiring concurrent access.

"A high-speed, reliable 802.11n wireless network that offers location-based tracking and simultaneous user log-in is essential to the success of the E-Book program," says Mark Hunter, Network Engineer at Forney Independent School District. "We also knew we needed a solution that would provide significant scalability and performance."

Bluesocket surpassed tough competition during an extensive test period, both in product performance and onsite support. With Bluesocket's assistance,

FORNEY
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

BLUESOCKET DEPLOYMENT AT FORNEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Robust next-generation vWLAN™ wireless network securely connects 7,600 students in 14 school locations
- More than 700 award-winning 1800 series BlueSecure™ 802.11n Access Points
- Guest Access reduces support tickets and administrative overhead
- BlueView™ Management System for centralized network control and administration
- Advanced reporting for user location and activity tracking

"The Bluesocket solution is a great fit with simple licensing, massive scalability and robust performance. As well, the ability to integrate with and extend the investment of our existing third-party access points was a huge bonus for the District."

Mark Hunter, Network Engineer at Forney Independent School District



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Hunter was able to set up a 3-month demo at one of the elementary schools. "Having unlimited access to the Bluesocket hardware and onsite engineering support was really amazing. Bluesocket made it clear from the beginning that they view our relationship as a long-term partnership, now and in the future," says Hunter.

The Bluesocket Solution

Following the test period Bluesocket worked closely with Hunter and the IT department to customize a comprehensive solution for the Forney district.

"Bluesocket's vWLAN™ architecture is ideally suited to meet our needs. At the client level, our teachers are focused on delivering the highest quality education to our students and don't have the time or resources to deal with connectivity issues or slow network performance," says Hunter. The Bluesocket solution is a great fit with simple licensing, massive scalability and robust performance. As well, the ability to integrate with and extend the investment of our existing third-party access points was a huge bonus for the District."

A major factor in the success of the E-book program is adoption by teachers and students, and that is dependent on ease of use. "We can't risk classes being interrupted with network access issues. Thousands of kids are firing up laptops at same time and the teachers just want the technology to work so they can focus on lesson plans," says Hunter. "With the Bluesocket solution everything is streamlined and reliable."

The initial wireless implementation supports the two high schools with more than 250 high-performance 1800 series BlueSecure™ 802.11n Access Points. In 2010 when the district is fully implemented, the Bluesocket deployment will have in excess of 700 high-performance 1800 series BlueSecure™ 802.11n Access Points. Additionally, Bluesocket's BlueView™ Management System enables the district to leverage and extend the life cycle of their existing network, improve network security with location-based controls and secure guest access, and reduce IT administrative time through a single management platform.

Forney ISD is taking full advantage of Bluesocket's BlueView™ Management System. This allows administrators to securely manage the internal network and external networks. Based on user access needs, the front desk at each school can issue temporary guest access passes to substitute teachers, visiting parents, attendees at extracurricular events, and vendors conducting onsite faculty training. Additionally, the high school library is open to the public and is now able to provide a new service to the community by offering secure Internet access. Librarians are able to set up user IDs with set expirations. IT administrators are thrilled to push out guest access management to the end users, reducing the number of support tickets and freeing up the help desk.

With the Bluesocket solution in place, Forney ISD is ready for future expansion with a flexible vWLAN architecture. As the wireless deployment expands to additional classrooms IT administrators plan to consolidate the third-party Access Points to the lower grades where there is less need to track user activity. They will continue to add and replace with Bluesocket BlueSecure™ Access Points throughout the system, with the goal of standardizing on the Bluesocket solution. In particular, the Bluesocket solution will be relied on at the middle school and high school levels where there are the greatest bandwidth and user activity concerns. IT administrators are also considering the addition of BlueProtect™ to enable users to securely connect to the network through personal devices.

"Bluesocket is committed to providing best-in-class technology and support to the Forney Independent School District. We look forward to continuing our close relationship as they grow and expand their wireless network," says Mads Lillelund, chief executive officer at Bluesocket. "As with the Forney deployment, we are leveraging our vWLAN™ architecture in opportunities that have significant scalability and performance requirements and challenging traditional overlay architectures where scalability comes at a price including higher operating costs and network complexity."