



Case Study | Brown County Schools

BROWN COUNTY SCHOOLS BOOSTS AUDIO WITH EPIC'S K-12 SOLUTION





Education-related case studies often feature more of the visual side of audio-visual solutions. But audio remains a real and frustrating challenge for many K-12 schools – especially those built decades ago.

The Brown County School District is situated among the rolling hills of rural southern Indiana and serves 600 students spread among five schools.

This case study shares how Brown County Schools decided to upgrade the audio system in one of its schools and was so blown away by the results that they implemented the solution district-wide.

CHALLENGE

The paging and intercom system was functional at Helmsburg Elementary, but it was the oldest PA system in the Brown County School District. Because the audio system was built decades ago, it didn't have any of the modern features that today's administrators and teachers want and need, such as:

- Having the flexibility to make announcements to grade levels or zones within the building rather than sending every message to every classroom
- Being able to edit bell schedules on the fly rather than creating new schedules or managing complex lists of schedules
- Adding amplification within each classroom rather than moving speakers and audio equipment from room to room

FORTÉ

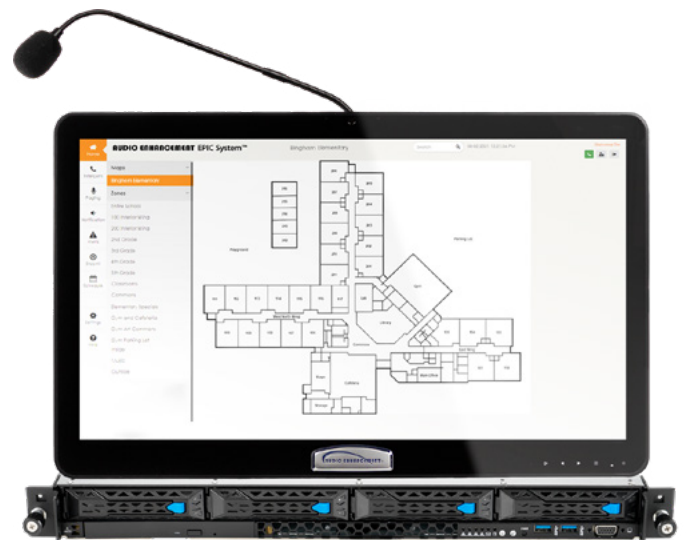
That's when David Phelps, the tech director from Brown County Schools, reached out to Audio Enhancement. He'd seen their logo on some audio equipment during a tour of another school and liked what he saw on the Audio Enhancement website.

In turn, Audio Enhancement introduced David to Kevin Eckstein, a senior account manager on the FORTÉ team with 12 years of K-12 experience. Because FORTÉ had done some work with Brown County Schools in the past, David felt comfortable moving forward.

SOLUTION

Kevin recommended that Brown County Schools look at the EPIC System by Audio Enhancement, which David had seen in place at another school. EPIC is a complete audio solution built specifically for education settings. It runs on a simple touchpad interface and includes a range of valuable features, including:

- Paging
- Customizable bells
- Two-way intercom with classrooms
- Interactive campus map with zone creation
- Emergency notifications
- Voice enhancement for teachers





David liked that he could get everything from one vendor as an integrated system. So, he and Kevin decided to test EPIC at Helmsburg Elementary School to see how it went before tackling audio needs for the rest of the district.

“By testing this solution, we got three benefits in one. First, we got the classroom sound we were looking for. We also were able to upgrade the oldest PA system we had in the district, which was becoming unreliable. And we were able to add voice enhancements for teachers, said Phelps. “In the end, voice enhancement was the real selling point in going with the EPIC system over other options.”

A quick note on installation:

In a perfect world, every audiovisual solution for K-12 would happen during the summer when classes aren't in session, but that's not always the case. Helmsburg was in session, so the current paging system had to stay operational.

“Our install team did much of the work behind the scenes to bring the new system online before taking the previous system down. Some of that work took place second shift, so it wasn't disruptive,” said Eckstein. “From the signed purchase agreement to the day we finished was about eight weeks.”



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David Phelps
Tech Director
Brown County Schools



THE RESULTS AND HUMAN IMPACT

Since we're in a classroom setting, the measure of impact is what students, teachers, and administrators think of the solution. Here's how Phelps characterizes their reactions:

Teachers can reach everyone by slipping a small lanyard microphone around their necks. The audio is fed to four speakers mounted in the ceilings, resulting in an even sound of the teacher's voice everywhere in the room. This reduces teacher voice strain and improves the student experience. And because the audio is hard-wired, it's simple to plug projectors or other sources into the system to play audio throughout the room.

Students have a better experience and can hear full, even sound from anywhere in the classroom. This provides a more valuable and engaging experience for all students, especially those with hearing impairments or auditory processing challenges.

"My middle schoolers joke about how they used to be able to escape the teacher's voices by going to the back of the room, said Phelps. "But that doesn't work anymore with the new system."

Administrators can communicate more effectively by directing pages to certain areas or rooms within the school or by setting different bell schedules. The touch interface is easy to use, and you can monitor every school or facility on your network in one place.

"Having the microphone system in my classroom is amazing. At the beginning of the school year, I always lost my voice. Now, I just speak normally, and my voice is amplified without straining it. I can adjust the volume to gather their attention or to quiet them down. I love using it dramatically during my read-aloud stories with my class. I can even mute it temporarily to speak individually to a student or small group. The best benefit the microphone adds to our classroom is that it allows all of the students to hear me clearly and at a regulated volume regardless of challenges they may have, like attention difficulties or auditory processing challenges. I am so grateful that our school system added these to our classroom."

Teresa Fultz, 1st Grade Teacher | Helmsburg Elementary School





From pilot test to district-wide implementation

Phelps says that while he worked with FORTÉ because of their educational expertise, how the team worked with him is what he found most impressive.

“What I appreciated about the FORTÉ team is their understanding of people and ability to listen. They knew what we were trying to achieve. So, if they were in the field and something about the plan didn’t make sense in that classroom – like the placement of a speaker or switch – they’d recommend an enhancement,” explained Phelps. “This allowed me to stay on top of what was happening and helped us achieve the outcomes we really wanted.”

Based on the success at Helmsburg Elementary, David and the FORTÉ team have already upgraded the remaining schools in the Brown County School District.

TECHNOLOGY PARTNER – AUDIO ENHANCEMENT

- EPIC System
- Amplifiers and speakers in each classroom
- Lanyards
- Speakers in hallways, common areas, administrative offices, district’s manufacturing facility
- Server in the building’s main office
- Network for district-wide access
- Connecting/wiring/integrating

