Case Study

The Client

The Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District (MCPASD) is a large district located in a suburb of Madison, Wisconsin. The district serves approximately 7,000 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The district includes 10 school facilities and three non-school facilities, and is geographically dispersed across eight municipalities, three law enforcement agencies, two fire department districts, and two EMS agencies.

The Business Challenge

As in many K-12 districts across the nation, MCPASD administrators and staff were increasingly concerned with having a way to protect their students in the event of an emergency. They needed a way to send coordinated emergency alerts within individual schools and across the district. However, they also had special challenges, because the district is within the jurisdiction of eight municipalities. This made it hard to coordinate with all of the different first response agencies in those municipalities.

MCPASD also had day-to-day communication challenges. The old system for public address was outdated and not meeting their needs. They needed a way to quickly and easily coordinate their daily activities and respond to internal emergencies.

The Solution

Singlewire's InformaCast software allowed MCPASD to create a centralized, easy-to-use system for targeted communication.

It allows MCPASD administrators and staff to lock down their schools, send alerts to key staff when 911 is dialed, call for assistance from classrooms, send district-wide weather alerts, and provide extra protection for their receptionists. It also helps the district streamline their operations, schedule bells, and coordinate communication through advanced paging capabilities.

"…It provides a consistent means of communicating and informing regarding an incident to, not just our first responders in those multiple agencies, but also to our staff and parents who are in multiple buildings, and our students in multiple buildings," says Tom Wohlleber, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services at MCPASD.

Keeping Students and Staff Safe

Doors in the school immediately close and lock automatically.
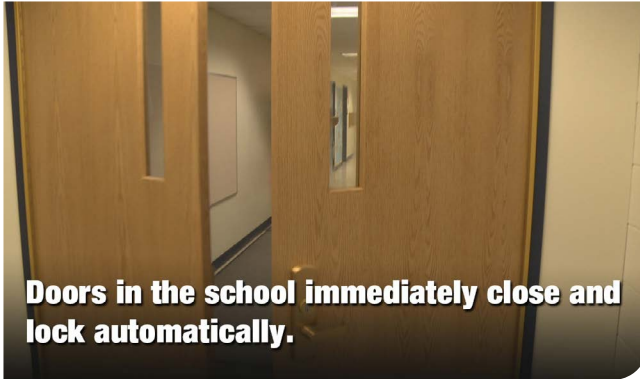
The safety of students and staff is always a top concern at MCPASD. Their InformaCast system helps the district be prepared no matter what kind of emergency they encounter.

School Lockdown

InformaCast is one of the fastest ways to send a lockdown message if there's an intruder in one of the schools. With InformaCast, any staff member can place the school in to lockdown by dialing a designated extension on his or her Cisco phone. This triggers the doors in the school to close and lock immediately and sends an alert to all classroom phones.

"In a lockdown, we're in survival mode, and we're talking about keeping people safe from danger, and to have that ability for those doors to

automatically close is very comforting to staff," says Robert Schell, Principal at Elm Lawn Elementary in MCPASD.

911/Emergency Call Alert

If there's a life-safety emergency, like a teacher having a heart attack, InformaCast ensures that he or she receives help as quickly as possible. InformaCast monitors for calls made from a district phone to an emergency number like 911. When the number is dialed, the system sends an automatic alert to the on-site police liaison officer and other important staff members. The alert includes a recording of the call, the time the call was placed, and the location of the phone that was used to place the call.

Classroom Call for Help Buttton on Phone

InformaCast allows staff members to call for help by pushing a button on their classroom phone. This immediately triggers an alert to a designated group of people, without broadcasting to the entire school. This feature was critical when there was a facility malfunction in Sauk Trail Elementary school in MCPASD.

"The pipes had frozen and the custodian had been watching for that. Water just started funneling out, and she thought to just go press the button. It alerted my phone, the office phone, the nurse's phone, all of the student services phones, our

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- Tom Wohlleber
  Assistant Superintendent

librarian, and central people who could respond right away. We all came, probably literally in 10-15 seconds," says Chris Dahlk, the principal of the school.

District-Wide Weather Alerting

Administrators can also manually send out alerts via Cisco phones or a secure Web portal if they want to notify their school offices and transportation people when there is a possibility of severe weather.

Panic Button/Silent Call to 911

The reception desk in the MCPASD main office is equipped with a panic button on the phone that triggers an immediate request for help from internal staff members.

It is also equipped with a silent 911 call button under the desk. When the receptionist pushes this button, a call with a pre-recorded request for assistance goes immediately to 911.

"[The 911 button is] a really easy button to get at. Makes me feel more comfortable, since I'm the only one here; I'm the first person they see," says MCPASD receptionist Betsy Buechner.
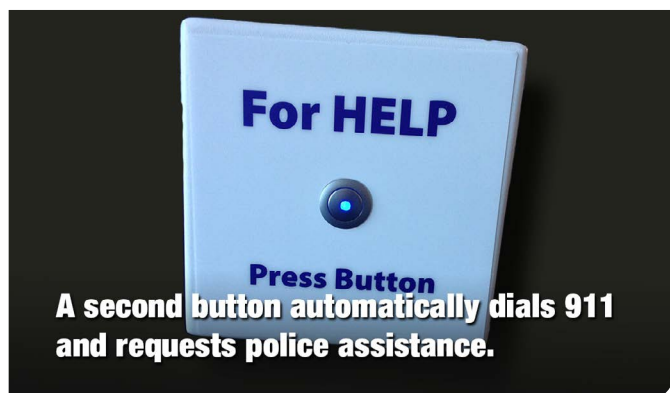
Coordinating Communication

InformaCast helps MCPASD organize and streamline everything from bell scheduling to classroom paging to district-wide communication.

Bell Scheduling and Overhead Paging

With InformaCast, MCPASD staff members can use a secure Web portal to set the bell schedule in advance for the entire school year, customize bell tones, and easily make changes for teacher inservice days, holidays, half days, and more.

"I'll set the entire year in advance, and if there are any delays or closings, I can do that as well. It's nice that I can do that either from home or at school...," says Roz Craney, Principal of North Side Elementary in MCPASD.

Classroom Intercom

InformaCast provides a wide range of granularity so whether MCPASD staff members need to send a message to a single phone or classroom, a particular group of people, or the entire district, InformaCast helps them reach the right people. A great example of this is InformaCast's one-to-one intercom functionality.

"Many times, parents come early to pick up their students. I would dial [the classroom] extension, and then at that time I'd be able to say the teacher's name and it would go over the intercom," says Denise Duhr, administrative assistant for MCPASD.

"I can also hear if there's chatter in their classroom, so I might be able to tell if they don't answer that they're not in the classroom," she says.

Saving Money

For the staff members at MCPASD, being able to use equipment that they already had was a great benefit and ended up saving them a lot of money.

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Singlewire's InformaCast software helped MCPASD to create a centralized, easy-to-use system for student and staff protection and targeted communication. By providing a quick and easy way for MCPASD administrators and staff to lock down their schools, send alerts to key staff when 911 is dialed, call for assistance from classrooms, send district-wide weather alerts, and provide extra protection for their receptionists, it helped the district meet the challenge of being geographically-dispersed across eight municipalities.

InformaCast also helped MCPASD administrators and staff streamline their day-to-day administrative and communication functions by helping them schedule bells, send targeted messages, and respond to internal emergencies faster.

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About Singlewire

Singlewire Software develops and supports innovative voice applications centered around secure, fast, and reliable mass notification capabilities. Our main application offerings: InformaCast, PushToTalk, and CallAware allow our customers unprecedented control in designing mass notifications, assigning them to specific recipients, and determining the medium for dissemination — IP phones, IP speakers, email, etc. — all with the peerless capacity for customization to our customers' specific environments. Singlewire is devoted to maintaining the agility and imagination needed to fulfill our customers' needs and fostering an environment for successful partnerships between our customers and our company.