

PEG Central is vital to Okemos Public Schools' ability to effectively communicate with parents and kids

Changing trends in area cable options and a Schools of Choice program created a gap in communication

The ability to easily stream district content through video-on-demand couldn't have come at a better time for The Okemos Channel, which broadcasts on Channels 23 and 913 within their township.

After implementing a PEG Central™ account, hosted by LEIGHTRONIX, the Okemos Channel's audience was able to extend far past the traditional constrictions of their local cable channel by offering streaming video that can be accessed throughout the world.

"It's a wonderful benefit for us to reach more of the Okemos parents and the people who care about Okemos programming," said Matt Ottinger, telecommunications manager for Okemos Public Schools.

The need for a more effective way of offering parents information became more important as numbers increased for those opting for satellite TV, an option that doesn't currently implement local educational access channels. That, combined with a rising trend in students attending schools in districts they don't reside in, made it difficult for all parents to receive updated information on the school system through traditional cable.

"Now we can have the very same programs on the Internet and people can watch them anytime they want,"



Telecommunications Manager for Okemos Schools, Matt Ottinger, has used LEIGHTRONIX products for over 17 years and trusts the company because of the reliability of their products.

Ottinger said. "The most exciting thing for us is that people who don't have cable or don't live in the immediate Okemos boundaries, now have an opportunity to view our programming."

With PEG Central, Ottinger has also been able to gauge to what extent his programming is being watched by the Okemos community. In some cases the results have far exceeded the district's expectations.

"We are always excited to follow the

number of hits various events have," he said. "Virtually every performance event has over 100 and board meetings have over 60, and those are terribly important to us."

Some programs surpass the expected amount of viewers, gaining hits of over 700. Some programs are meant for memories or fun, such as graduation ceremonies, while others are published purely to inform parents.

"One example was in conjunction with a survey we sent out to parents," Ottinger said. "The superintendent came to me and asked if they could link directly to a video on PEG Central





Ottinger receives an email when a video has been uploaded to PEG Central, then all he has to do is add the video's metadata and push publish for the video to be viewed by the public.

that explained the survey's content, so that those parents who were confused about the topic could immediately review the video before answering questions."

Within a week, over 700 parents had reviewed the video content on the school's PEG Central account and answered the survey.

"Providing a link to the presentation right on the survey was a great success," said Assistant Superintendent of Okemos Public Schools, Patty Trelstad. "Over half of those who answered the survey responded that they received the information from our PEG Central site. To me that shows a success in keeping the public informed and generating real-time feedback by using video technology."

Even when information is not directly linked, the access station finds it very user-friendly, allowing parents to find a specific video right away.

"When people see it for the first time, they are absolutely blown away it's so easy to use," Ottinger said. "If the video is new, it's on the front page,

but if it's older, parents can easily search for videos and find topics based on specific schools in the district."

The Okemos Channel also provides viewers with indexed video.

"For instance, a concert has every single musical number broken out into chapters," Ottinger said. "When

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**- Matt Ottinger
The Okemos Channel**

a parent goes to the Web site they are anxious to find their student's performance, so they can click on the link to the song their child is performing in and view that portion of the video."

When publishing the content, the site's ease-of-use doubles as a way to maximize the efforts of the channel's small staff by allowing a lot of programming to be published in very little time.

"Now that we don't spend so much

time scheduling programming, doing what used to take two hours in 15 minutes. Our limited staff here has been able to focus on expanding our programming," Ottinger said. "We are now toying with ideas for original shows."

The station uses the UltraNEXUS™ to schedule programming to their cable channel, and benefits from the server's dual encoders that automatically produce a version of each video for publishing on the Web.

"This has become the simplest thing for us," Ottinger said. "All we have to do is play a DVD in real time. As the UltraNEXUS captures it, we can let it run and walk away. When it's done, we get an email saying that a PEG Central file has been uploaded. Then all we have to do is schedule it for broadcast and publish it to the Web."

Working with LEIGHTRONIX, Ottinger never has to worry about whether or not the programs scheduled will be up and running while working on other programming for the channel thanks to the unmatched reliability of their products.

"The beauty of LEIGHTRONIX is the reliability," he said. "We virtually never have a problem and the cool thing is even if we just have a question we can call their support staff and get it answered immediately."

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