

Case Study: Royalton Public Schools, Royalton, Minnesota

Staff and technology experts team up to advocate for the importance of synchronized time.

Royalton Public Schools Quick Facts

American Time solution: SiteSync IQ Hybrid Clock System

Number of clocks: Three master clocks (two wired and one wireless); 11 double-dial digital clocks, 15 wireless clocks and 60 wired clocks

Number of buildings: 3

Approximate square feet covered: 120,000 and growing

Overview

Royalton Public Schools serves approximately 950 students in preschool – grade 12 in Central Minnesota. Its elementary school building and its combined middle school/high school campus are located one half-mile apart.

Challenge

The elementary and middle school/high school relied on wired clocks throughout their buildings, but none of the clocks were synchronized. This caused many problems for students, teachers, and other district staff such as bus drivers. For example, students had five minutes to dress and get to the bus stop at the end of the day. When clocks were a few minutes off, it caused students to be late or nearly miss the bus. One teacher lost three minutes of prep time every day because his students showed up too early from another class. A school social worker pointed out that knowing the correct time was imperative for allowing children to receive adequate services and not disrupt their academics.

Additionally, many staff complained about having to use their cell phone to check the time, which they felt was unprofessional and counter to their classroom rules about cell phone use during learning times.

Tony Duevel, building and grounds director at Royalton Schools, began evaluating synchronized timekeeping systems that would keep all of the clocks showing the same, precise time. This would help the schools operate more efficiently, give students and teachers a better experience, reduce tardiness problems and cut down on maintenance costs.

“There were two or three clocks on my workbench at all times,” Duevel explained. “Even just to repair a clock...the guts aren’t cheap, and sometimes it would take me an hour to fix it.”

Duevel and the district needed approval from the school board before purchasing new clocks and a synchronized time system. Board members were unfamiliar with the benefits of synchronized time and questioned the need for it. Therefore, another challenge became educating board members on why investing in synchronized time was important for learning, safety and cost-efficient operations.

Solution

Duevel selected the American Time SiteSync IQ Hybrid Clock System for the Royalton elementary and middle school/high school. SiteSync IQ could integrate with Royalton’s existing wired clock system along with any new wireless clocks that they installed – an excellent solution for a district that wanted to replace many, but not all, of its clocks.

To convince the school board, Duevel attended several meetings to explain the importance of synchronized time, presented many testimonials from teachers and staff on why synchronized time was needed, and invited technology experts from American Time to discuss synchronized time products and systems.

Results

After listening to the teachers’ input and learning about the benefits of a synchronized, campus-wide timekeeping system, the board approved the purchase of an American Time SiteSync IQ controller, three master clocks (two wired and one 40-watt wireless), 11 double-dial digital clocks, 15 wireless clocks and 60 wired clocks with the Royalton Schools logo on them.

“I’ve gotten lots of positive feedback from teachers and staff about how helpful it is to finally have synchronized time. Every clock, computer and device in our schools shows the exact same time,” said Duevel. “Even a bus driver commented on how much easier it is for them to stay on time because all of our students are coming out at the same time instead of three or four minutes apart. We’re very happy with the service!”

Some of the original wired clocks were working well, so they were kept until they broke down. This way, Royalton could incrementally replace them with new American Time clocks in a more budget-friendly way.

“The master controller has enough power to talk to our combined middle school/high school, plus our elementary school that’s a half-mile away,” said Duevel. “It’s a lot of power, but we chose the larger 40-watt controller because then we’d only need one to talk to all of the schools.”

During daylight saving time changes twice per year, the clocks automatically update, so there is no need for maintenance staff to make adjustments. The clocks also self-correct after power outages.

Duevel noted that he doesn't have a stack of clocks sitting on his work bench any more - "maintenance has gone down to about nothing" - and even the older clocks that weren't changed out are running more accurately because the American Time controllers send out a time signal more often, keeping the older clocks on time more accurately.

Educating a board or committee on the need for investing in a synchronized time system and new clocks can be a challenge, and Duevel encourages other districts to use a variety of resources. "In addition to feedback from the teachers and staff about why accurate time is important, I'd recommend using the input of the professionals at American Time," he said. "They came to our school board meetings to discuss their systems and they were familiar with our legacy clocks too. And the school board got all of their questions answered about the technology and why a system was needed. It was a win-win. I couldn't have convinced the board on my own."

Future plans

In recent years, Royalton's enrollment numbers have been increasing and classroom space has become tight. As a result, voters approved a bond referendum to fund improvements and expansions throughout the district. The new building areas will have wireless clocks, and with American Time's SiteSync IQ system, any wireless clock will be automatically detected and synched by the master controller.

"SiteSync IQ is going to save us a ton of money on wiring because I'll be able to just hang a wireless clock anywhere someone needs it, and it's good for five years," said Duevel. "Plus, we save money on the installation because we can just hang up the clocks ourselves. They will be great for our expansion!"

To discover more details of the SiteSync IQ Wireless Clock System, visit american-time.com.