

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, smiling. The boy is on the left, wearing a grey jacket, and the girl is on the right, wearing a pink scarf and a blue backpack. The background is blurred.

Education Success Story

Menlo School partners with Syn-Apps to enhance school safety

CUSTOMER OVERVIEW

Menlo School, located in Atherton, California, is an independent college preparatory school for students grades 6 - 12. Menlo is comprised of a Middle and Upper school with 795 enrolled students and approximately 200 faculty members. Menlo School began searching for a notification solution to enhance school safety and emergency preparedness. After months of evaluating emergency notification vendors, Menlo turned to Syn-Apps in 2013. Syn-Apps' SA-Announce notification software helped Menlo School transform their existing infrastructure into a unified communication platform utilized primarily for the school's emergency notification needs.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

School safety has been a growing public concern in recent years. Events such as natural disasters and critical situations on school campuses have caused a nationwide initiative to improve emergency preparedness and crisis-communication plans. Leveraging technology has helped drive school safety initiatives by streamlining emergency communication processes and enabling faculty members to react quickly when situations occur.

Menlo needed a solution easy enough for administrators to activate notifications, but powerful enough to broadcast campus-wide notifications. *"The ability to communicate an emergency situation quickly, efficiently, and effectively remains a critical requirement for Menlo School,"* explained Menlo School's Network Manager, Eric DeStefano.

Quick Facts about Menlo School:

- Established in 1915 in Atherton, CA
- 795 enrolled students
- Approximately 200 faculty
- Syn-Apps customer since 2013
- Unified Communication Platform: ShoreTel

"From the start, I felt it was very clear that Syn-Apps was the right choice for Menlo School. Their unmatched connectivity to the ShoreTel Unified Communications Platform, combined with their excellent Sales and Support team is a perfect fit for Menlo School."

Combined with multi platform integration is second to none, thoughtful hardware aesthetics for easy installation, and well written software - I feel it would be hard to go wrong with Syn-Apps."

Eric DeStefano
Network Manager
Menlo School

Deploying an All-Inclusive Solution

Managing disparate systems can cause process inefficiencies such as communication delays and potential human error, thus jeopardizing school safety and security during emergencies. As such, Menlo School needed a notification solution that integrated with their existing ShoreTel Unified Communication Platform, as well as a legacy paging system located within the Middle school facilities. Eric DeStefano explained:

Menlo School had been pursuing, for some time, an emergency notification system, that was turn-key based. . . . From the start, I felt it was very clear that Syn-Apps was the right choice for Menlo School. Their unmatched connectivity to the ShoreTel Unified Communications Platform, combined with their excellent Sales and Support team is the perfect fit for Menlo School. After several successful proof-of-concept evaluations, I was more than happy to recommend we move forward with them.

By deploying SA-Announce, Menlo was able to utilize their existing network by directly integrating to their ShoreWare Director and IP phones. To complete the integration, Menlo also installed a Syn-Apps Paging Relay device in the Middle school building to leverage their existing analog paging system. The multipurpose device serves as an adaptor, allowing SA-Announce notifications to be broadcasted across the IP network to the analog system.

The seamless integration provided by SA-Announce, allows multiple systems to be tied together in order to offer an easy and efficient emergency notification solution, without having to replace any existing infrastructure.

Simplifying Communication to Enhance School Safety

With the implementation of SA-Announce, Menlo School has created a reliable, easy-to-use system that provides simultaneous communication across all school buildings and desired devices.

“Menlo School drills frequently and constantly, to keep our readiness level high. . . . I can say with 100% certainty that our drills [with] the SA-Announce Software & Hardware we have deployed works perfectly. We owe a lot to the Engineers, Sales, and Support team at Syn-Apps for making the maintenance of their product effortless,” DeStefano praised.

The total solution has allowed for a reduction in notification delays and the simplified management of multiple disparate systems. Now, when significant events occur, any authorized personnel can activate a notification from any cell phone or campus phone. “Our people love this! They can call the proper Emergency extension, enter the security code, and they can put the school on lock-down in the event of a crisis or campus threat,” concluded DeStefano.

Looking Forward

As Menlo continues to entrust their school safety procedures in Syn-Apps’ technology, they have long-term plans to expand upon their deployment of SA-Announce. This will include the remodeling of their Middle School with the expanded implementation of IP speakers that easily integrate with the software.

They also plan to add another Paging Relay, which will be used to integrate SA-Announce with their Whelen Mass Notification Sirens; again tying their IP phones, both analog and IP speakers, and other third party systems together to create effective, campus-wide communication.