

8x8 Cloud Communications Enables Texas School District to Prepare for Double-Digit Growth

Little Elm, independent school district



Little Elm Independent School District is growing rapidly, with double or even triple enrollment projected by 2025. When the district's 20-year-old hardware PBXs became impossible to maintain or expand, the need for a replacement phone system became urgent. After speaking to 8x8 customers with similar needs and budgets, the district took the pioneering step of implementing 8x8 cloud communications in an education environment. Now Little Elm ISD is ready for the future—and at a considerable cost savings, too.

The Little Elm Independent School District (ISD) is one of the fastest-growing school districts in the state of Texas. The town of Little Elm is an up-and-coming community located between the larger towns of Frisco and Denton, Texas. Its close proximity to Dallas-Fort Worth and miles of scenic lakefront property make Little Elm an attractive destination for businesses and families looking to settle down in a quieter, less urban environment.

Over the next 10 years, both the town's population and number of students enrolled in the district are expected to double—or even triple—in size. Parents, teachers, school administrators and school board members are all working together to ensure that Little Elm ISD is prepared to handle that rapid growth and continue to provide students with a world-class education. This will likely mean adding campuses, faculty, staff and services throughout the district as enrollment expands.

Outdated Phone System Becomes a Barrier to Expansion

From an IT perspective, however, there was one major barrier blocking the district's growth plans. For almost 20 years, phone service had been provided by two on-premises NEC PBXs. Although they had served the district long and well, they were far past the normal life span for phone technology, and were now holding the district back.

"Our hardware PBXs were so old that we could no longer get support or parts for them," explains David Rodriguez, Network Administrator for Little Elm. "It was impossible to add users or classrooms because we couldn't expand the phone system. It was like we were stuck in the twentieth century and needed to take a big step forward."

**Customer:**

Little Elm Independent School District

Industry: Education

Locations:

Little Elm, Texas—10 campuses

Number of Users: 1,000

8x8 Products: 800 Virtual Office lines

Connectivity: Fiber through AT&T

Favorite 8x8 Features:

- Email notification of voicemail
- Extension dialing across the district
- Mobile app for the IT department

Primary reason chose 8x8:

Ability to scale cost-effectively as the school district grows

Previous Phone System:

Two on-premises NEC PBXs

Website:

www.littleelmsd.net/leisd



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—**David Rodriguez**
Network Administrator
for Little Elm School
District

The Little Elm team began looking into replacement phone systems that could accommodate the district’s projected growth. First the team considered another traditional, premises-based solution, but the IT burden of maintaining that kind of system concerned them.

“Our IT department is small and we already have a lot on our plates,” David explains. “Although the district is growing, our team is not. We have to support more users, devices and services with our current resources. Maintaining another hardware PBX would have been overwhelming for us.”

Customer References Convince School District to Select 8x8

With that realization, Rodriguez took another tack and was asked to start researching cloud-based solutions. The promise of a more cost-effective, expandable and easy-to-manage phone system intrigued him, but he could not find comparable school districts that had implemented this kind of solution.

Nevertheless, Rodriguez reached out to industry-leader 8x8 with a simple, straightforward question: can your cloud communications work for us? 8x8 responded by introducing Rodriguez to a number of 8x8 customers from the nonprofit world, organizations with needs and budgets similar to Little Elm ISD. Impressed with the 8x8 solution and what they heard from 8x8 customers, Rodriguez received the approval to take the plunge.

“After talking with 8x8 customers, we felt confident the service was a good fit for our school district,” he says. “We were willing to be pioneers for the education market in Texas.”

Fast, Smooth Deployment Is a Huge Win for the IT Team

The original plan was for Little Elm ISD to begin its 8x8 deployment in August while schools were not in session. But when one of the district’s old NEC PBXs started to fail, the plan quickly changed.

“We decided to move the deployment date up and start rolling out 8x8 in July,” says Rodriguez. “It just made more sense to focus our IT resources on the new system instead of trying to fix problems with the old one.”

Within two weeks, 8x8 was fully deployed across 10 campuses, including the administration building. More than 800 devices and 1,000 users were brought online. The only surprises were how easy the process was.

“Everything went very smoothly and it was a major relief to migrate off of the old phone system,” says Rodriguez. “Our users loved 8x8 from day one because the call quality is so clear! On our old system, it sounded like we were talking through tin cans. The 8x8 rollout was a huge win for our IT team, especially since we were able to do it quickly, even with limited staff.”

Rodriguez credits 8x8 with helping Little Elm ISD prepare for a successful implementation. He notes that 8x8’s deployment engineers set up a structure for the rollout that included data import, programming and number porting. At the end of the day, he says, “all the planning paid off.”

8x8 Proves Dramatically More Cost-Effective Than Old PBX

When Little Elm ISD switched from POTS lines to 8x8 cloud communications, the district’s phone costs decreased significantly. Since school districts are always under pressure to conserve funds, this drastic slashing of the District’s communications expense has been a huge benefit.

CASE STUDY

“Our cost savings with 8x8 are enormous compared to the old system,” says Rodriguez. “Switching to cloud communications has been much more cost-effective than staying with traditional lines.”

Advanced Phone Features Move District into the 21st Century

With all of Little Elm ISD’s campuses now connected by 8x8 cloud communications, users can call anyone internally by dialing a 5-digit extension, no matter which campus they are located on. Faculty members use 8x8 phones in their classrooms to hold parent-teacher conferences. Office staff can now forward voicemail messages via email instead of writing down messages on pieces of paper. Rodriguez is delighted by all this progress.

“Because our previous phone system was so outdated, we had gotten into the habit of doing things the old-fashioned way,” he observes. “With 8x8, we have finally entered the twenty-first century.”

Another twenty-first-century change is the ability to use a softphone client on a laptop instead of a traditional desk phone to make calls, send messages and check voicemail. This new flexibility is redefining the way district workers approach their jobs.

“8x8’s phone features give us more time to focus on what’s important: the students, their parents, and our coworkers,” says Rodriguez.

This holds true even for the Little Elm IT department. Rodriguez’s team members are frequently out of the office, moving from campus to campus within the district. With the 8x8 mobile app, they can essentially set up shop anywhere without missing calls and messages, enhancing their productivity.

Partnering with 8x8 Helps School Districts “Work Miracles”

By becoming one of the first Texas school districts to implement cloud communications, Little Elm ISD is now ready to handle the future. When asked what he would tell a colleague at another district contemplating a similar switch, Rodriguez says he would urge them to move forward—as long as they partner with 8x8.

“School districts only have so much budget, and we have to work miracles with what we have,” he says. “8x8’s solution is robust, highly reliable, and cost-effective for the district to implement, and also pliable for the IT department to maintain. With 8x8, we can expand and modify our phone system as needed and support all the customers we serve, both internal and external.”



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Find out how 8x8 can help your business. Call **1.866.862.2811** or visit **www.8x8.com**

