Perhaps more than any other time in history, school campuses need effective security equipment and tools not only to ensure the physical safety of students, teachers, staff and administration, but also to create a safe environment where effective learning takes place. After all, students deserve a safe place to learn and thrive as they grow, and teachers deserve a safe place to teach. To achieve this type of security within the budgetary constraints most campuses are faced with, the majority of school districts seek cost-effective security equipment with the hope that it will also be effective. With cloud video surveillance, schools can achieve both.
School districts’ budgets for security varies by city, town or province as well as by state; therefore, some campuses have been able to embrace cloud video surveillance solutions while others are sustaining the best they can with older IP and analog solutions that don’t leverage cloud technology.

The Problem… Old Technology

“We had a surveillance system where the DVR could only be viewed using a dedicated computer with Windows XP,” explained Dianne Anderson, Ph.D., technology coordinator, McKenzie Special School District.

The schools old surveillance systems were based on a technology that required an outdated Windows platform. This type of situation is common with surveillance platforms that don’t leverage the cloud. One drawback to non-cloud based surveillance systems using old technology is that the software requires expensive updates. For campuses to be eligible for these updates, manufacturers have to write expensive updates to compensate for their older, more ridged software architecture, and the cost is rolled down to the enduser with expensive software and camera licenses. This is exactly what happened to McKenzie Special School District in Tennessee, and it left them with a surveillance platform that required a dedicated computer running on Windows XP. Since Windows XP is no longer supported by Microsoft, the surveillance solution became obsolete.

How Could This Happen?

One of the big challenges facing organizations today is that their surveillance technology was not designed to grow and change overtime. Their video surveillance technology has gotten old and irrelevant. They were implemented 10-15 years ago on software that was created years before. Technology has changed dramatically in the last 20 years, and the market has changed around them.

The things that some surveillance manufacturers have done to make their old surveillance platforms “look” modern is impressive, but don’t be fooled. They have wrapped them in compensating technology, layered in features and functions that didn’t exist when they were built, all on software foundations that were never designed for those types of applications or significant changes. Maintaining a surveillance software platform that was initially designed in the 80’s or 90’s has created software implementations that have become very rigid, very heavy and very expensive. In this case, it left a school district with a surveillance platform that required a dedicated terminal and a very specific operating system that was completely out of date and unsupported.
The Solution... New Cloud Video Surveillance Technology

“We reviewed several cloud-based video surveillance manufacturers, but we chose Smartvue,” said Dianne Anderson, Ph.D., technology coordinator, McKenzie Special School District. “We feel like our campuses, students and faculty are better protected with the Smartvue solution.”

Cloud video surveillance offers campuses a cost-effective option to an enterprise-grade video surveillance system. Many manufactures will say they have cloud video surveillance because they offer cloud storage, but a true cloud video surveillance solution leverages the cloud for much more.

Smartvue truly leverages the cloud to deliver software as a service, which dramatically changes the economics of enterprise video surveillance software by reducing cost and price. Smartvue leverages cloud technology to build its software in a way that can support organizational change, process change, and information model change. This means that Smartvue’s agile surveillance platform will move with your organization over time, because it’s designed with new technology to address change very easily, very inexpensively, and very quickly.

“We installed a 34-camera system at our high school and a 31-camera system at our middle school, all of which are connected to Smartvue,” said Anderson. “Smartvue provided all the features required to meet our goals and more.”

“Smartvue is the best choice when compared to other video surveillance manufactures.”

- DIANNE ANDERSON, PH.D., TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR, MCKENZIE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ENA, a surveillance integration firm, assisted with the installation by connecting the school's existing cameras to Smartvue, allowing McKenzie Special School District to utilize its existing network and cameras making installation simple.

“We seek partnerships with surveillance providers that help ENA service our school districts by being scalable and simple to implement. Smartvue’s surveillance solutions helps us do just that.”

- STEPHEN KLAUSNER, PARTNER PROGRAM ACCOUNT SERVICES, ENA.

With the ability to add unlimited users at no additional cost and scale without the extra cost of camera licenses, an organization’s level of security is immediately multiplied. Authorized users can access a browser-based cloud system’s cameras on a laptop, tablet or smartphone, no matter where the user is located. This enables multiple sets of eyes to monitor the campus 24/7.

“The Smartvue system is easy to access from smartphones, as well as computers. Now we can monitor and manage our cameras no matter where we are.”

- DIANNE ANDERSON, PH.D., TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR, MCKENZIE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Some schools are also taking advantage of this specific feature by adding the local police department as an authorized user. This gives officers situational awareness as to what’s taking place on a campus through surveillance feeds, providing a tool for quicker response time, should a campus incident occur.

One of McKenzie school district's main goals was to have a video surveillance system in which all camera-covered areas could be viewed and monitored online. This would enable the campuses to provide security around the clock.

“I wanted to switch to a different system that would work online as well,” explained Anderson.

Smartvue’s technology is truly cloud-based, so it works in a browser and can be accessed remotely via the web, on any device. This also means that there are no special software downloads or specially-dedicated surveillance terminals needed.

“Now, our SRO [school resource officer] has the ability to log into our cloud-based system and see all the cameras whenever he needs to as well as the local police,” said Anderson.
Realizing that school campus’ needs change over time is a huge key to cloud video surveillance as some providers insist on charging a fee for each additional camera license; but, Smartvue understands campus surveillance and allows schools to add or remove cameras at any time without the extra cost of camera licenses.

“Smartvue allows us to be scalable without paying for additional camera licensing fees.”

- S. DIANNE ANDERSON, PH.D., MCKENZIE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Results...

The ultimate goal of most schools is to provide a safe and secure environment so that students can learn, teachers can teach, and administration and staff can support the learning process. When an incident does occur, campuses need to be properly equipped with the most effective type of video surveillance at a comfortable price point. This is achieved by working with the right provider of cloud video surveillance, one who clearly understands the campus environment, the unique security challenges such a location poses, and the budgetary constraints involved.

“We feel like our campuses, students and faculty are better protected with the Smartvue solution.”

- Dianne Anderson, Ph.D., technology coordinator, McKenzie Special School District.