

FirstClass Unified Communications: The Total Communications Solution for Education

Challenge	FirstClass Solution
Cross-platform environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ flexible, cross-platform (Windows, Mac) and customizable communications and learning environment ▶ not limited by type of access method or physical location ▶ access FirstClass via local network, modem, or the Internet using FirstClass software or a web browser, or via the telephone
Users (teachers, students) do not "own" the hardware they work on; often work on multiple pieces of equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ content is stored on the FirstClass server, not on the local device or computer ▶ access via any device provides consistent set of features and functionality (computer, web, telephone) across all other devices
Equal Access / Digital Divide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ FirstClass can be accessed via any computer, web browser, handheld, or telephone ▶ content is stored on the FirstClass server, not on the local device or computer ▶ facilitates teacher-parent communication via any communication medium; parent does not need a computer to communicate with the teacher, hear homework assignments or class updates ▶ content and functionality is consistent, regardless of the type of device used to access the content
Lean or decreasing hardware, software & IT budgets – the requirement to "do more with less"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ FirstClass can be implemented in a low hardware (often 1- or 2-server) environment and requires very little technical administration (single full time administrator or less per system) ▶ scales to support hundreds of thousands of users in a single environment ▶ a single solution provides voice & fax messaging, email, collaboration, calendaring, and web publishing functionality ▶ full flexibility and functionality of the entire solution can be achieved with very low investment of financial, human and technical resources
Cost of voice mail and telephone wiring to all classrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ functionality of a comprehensive voice messaging solution (custom greetings, call transfer options, auto-attendant, voice messaging, fax integration) can be achieved without physical installation of telephones or telephone service to each classroom
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ secure access to content, permissions specified by user and groups ▶ ensure that important announcements are distributed efficiently; all users can receive important information immediately via any device



Costly maintenance, consumables, and cost of lines & service for multiple fax machines which are inaccessible from alternate locations

- ▶ eliminate most fax machines and supplies such as paper and toner
- ▶ eliminate cost of multiple fax lines
- ▶ user's personal fax messages remain confidential and secure
- ▶ gain time by receiving faxes in the mailbox rather than checking a fax machine multiple times each day

Cost of supporting messaging systems for multiple groups or types of devices (email, voice mail, cell phone voice mail, etc)

- ▶ Unified Communications provides a single mailbox and single point of contact for all messages, regardless of where they were received or in which medium

Productivity loss due to time spent checking multiple message systems

- ▶ saves users 30+ minutes/day, translating into 125 hours or 16 days per year of increased productivity per user
- ▶ (Source: Radicati Group, 2000)

Parent & Community Involvement

- ▶ plain-text content is automatically rendered to the school's dynamic website, making it simple to keep parents or community members up-to-date
- ▶ auto-attendant allows outside callers to be routed to the information they need, such as Teacher's voice mail, homework update, school news, etc.
- ▶ text content can be available via auto-attendant's phone interface, making it easy to update content and keep parents involved

Timeliness & availability of information

- ▶ parents can report absences via phone to a conference rather than a live person, thereby freeing up a secretary's time for more important tasks

Interoperability between different types of stakeholders, using different types of communication devices

- ▶ messages left via phone can be responded to via email; faxes can be shared immediately between individuals or groups
- ▶ administration staff can be notified of urgent messages remotely
- ▶ Parents do not need a computer to communicate with teachers; teachers do not need phones in the classroom to receive or respond to voice messages

Costs (productivity, financial) of supporting paper-based community

- ▶ digital sharing of information, along with security and tracking features, ensure that important data is disseminated quickly and appropriately
- ▶ paper production of memos, faxes, documents, etc. is decreased

Accountability

- ▶ built in security and history-tracking functions ensure efficient action and follow-up
- ▶ ability to access and archive content – particularly voice messages – indefinitely; detailed history functions allow users to see who has received content and when