

FirstClass Unified Communications Benefiting K12 Organizations

Schools and school districts are very complex organizations with multiple communications challenges. There are a variety of different stakeholders including students, teachers, administrators, assistants, parents, and many other community members. These people deal with multiple media, across multiple locations and with varying access to communications devices such as phones, computers, fax machines, and hand-held digital devices.

Three key challenges in providing effective voice communications services for teachers include:

- Providing improved and timely voice contact to and for teachers
- Delivering innovative solutions for enhanced communications between parents/guardians for homework assignments, upcoming school events or field trips, or emergencies
- Providing effective records management for important voice and fax based communications such as Parental Consent forms

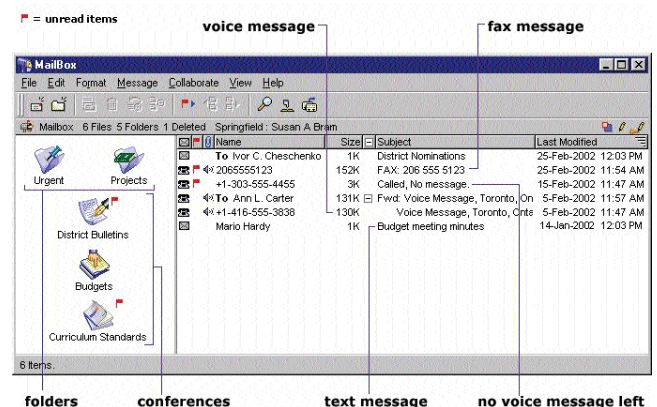
The Solution

School Districts that want to improve communication can greatly benefit from a flexible collaboration architecture that has been developed specifically to meet their unique needs. FirstClass Unified Communications is an integrated solution that is very easily deployed in schools and across school districts. In addition to ease of installation and use, FirstClass also boasts one of the lowest costs of ownership in the market. From email to voicemail, to fully integrated unified communications, FirstClass is a flexible and secure solution for K12 schools and school districts.

Making Voicemail Useful to Teachers

To date, the voicemail solutions that have been provided to teachers in educational settings are based on functionality requirements of business organizations. Typical voicemail features are built for businesses, and residential use, and do not meet the unique needs of teachers. For instance, a typical business voicemail user has a desk or an office with a dedicated phone. A person will notice that a voicemail indicator light is on their phone, signaling that they have a new voice message. In a teaching environment, teachers may not work in a dedicated classroom. Even if they do have a permanent classroom to work in, it may not be equipped with a phone. Voicemail alone is not innovative enough to be an effective communication tool for teachers.

There are many examples of how FirstClass Unified Messaging can address these issues. FirstClass is designed with a wider range of methods to notify teachers that there are messages waiting for them. For example, FirstClass can notify you that a new message is waiting by indicating so on your personal computer, Personal Digital Assistant, or Cellular phone. Your messages, in the form of a faxed permission slip, a parent call, or a message from the office - is all available to you within FirstClass. Compare that to voicemail implementations in business environments, where the only notification that a user sees is a flashing light on their phone.



FirstClass Voice Menus

FirstClass Voice Menus extend the capabilities of FirstClass Messaging. The FirstClass Voice Menu features work with voicemail to enable customized greetings or messages that can be used to disseminate to different groups of parents and faculty.

Imagine the following... You are a teacher in a school where FirstClass has just been implemented. As a teacher, you are given your own phone number (voicemail box) regardless of the number of telephones that physically exist in your school. You have quickly and easily set up a voicemail greeting for your Grade 7 Class:

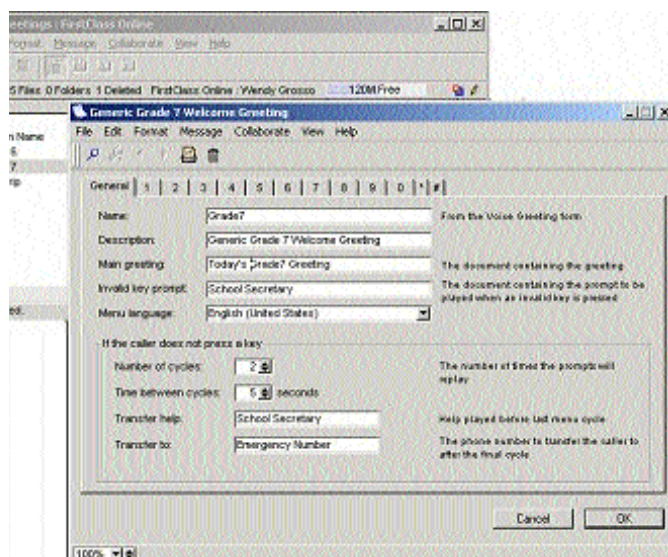
Welcome to Mr. Carter's Grade 7 FirstClass Unified Mailbox. I can't take your call right now.

Press 1 to listen to today's homework assignments.

Press 2 to hear information about next week's field trip.

Press 3 to leave me a private and confidential message.

Press 0 to transfer to someone in our Administration office immediately.



Parents can now call you for information and assistance without disturbing you or your class. The administrative staff's workload of message taking is also alleviated, allowing administrators to manage their time effectively.

Custom greetings can be created based on time of day, the number called, or incoming telephone numbers or partial numbers (for example, using all numbers that begin with a particular area code). A teacher can also associate parents numbers with a custom greeting. Innovative greetings can be created that provide personalized information for each parent's phone number.

Records Management

Management of student records is a key challenge in educational organizations. Just think of the voice and fax records that are received, tracked, stored, archived, date stamped, and searched upon each day in any school. For example, it is becoming more common for a parent or guardian to grant permission for external school activities such as field trips by either faxing the school a permission form, or contacting the school or teacher verbally. FirstClass Unified Communications can improve your school district's ability to access and track important records including voice and fax messages. With FirstClass, voice and fax messages can be handled in a secure and managed process in the same way as other critical records.

Conclusion

FirstClass Unified Communications is a powerful solution for K12 school districts. It is easy to use, highly scalable and very reliable - FirstClass just takes care of itself. FirstClass will make communication between students, teachers, parents, and school board administrators far more effective. By implementing FirstClass Unified Communications, you can take a step forward in improving communication throughout your educational community.

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