



ABBOTTSLEIGH

Industry

Education

Daily Use

- Virtual excursions with subject matter experts around the world
- Inter-classroom collaboration
- Professional staff development
- Inter-school collaboration
- Education conferences
- Internal communications

Solution

- Polycom® HDX® 8000 room telepresence

Results and Benefits

- Interactive classroom environment
- Cultural exchanges
- Increased interaction between campus
- Best practice professional development
- Increased parental awareness of curriculum

Abbotsleigh School Delivers Global Learning Experiences to Students Using Polycom® Telepresence

Abbotsleigh is an independent, Anglican, day and boarding school for girls, founded in 1885 and located in the northern Sydney suburb of Wahroonga. Educating approximately 1,400 students each school year, Abbotsleigh is among the leading educational institutions in Australia to augment their curriculum using interactive collaborative communications.

Changing Education for the 21st Century

Abbotsleigh's goal was to add a new dimension to classroom learning by supplementing traditional lectures with real-time lessons from specialists located around the world. With advances in communication technologies dramatically altering the experiences and expectations of students in the 21st century, it was critical that Abbotsleigh's pedagogical approach become more innovative, and that educational content be more dynamic and internationally focused.

Whereas traditional off-site class excursions were time-consuming and often impossible, virtual excursions over video proved highly effective in bringing experts directly to the classroom, in real time and for minimal cost. To design and deploy their video network, Abbotsleigh turned to solutions from Polycom, the trusted expert in telepresence for educators.

Tapping Global Experts

Rather than being a rarely-used novelty, it was critical for Abbotsleigh that telepresence become fully integrated with the educational experience and create a dynamic, interactive, and global classroom. "We look at what the students are covering in their curriculum and look for content that will help to enrich their learning experience," said Warwick Noble, IT Director of Abbotsleigh. "One of our imperatives is that we are preparing our students to be true global citizens, and the technology allows us to reach well beyond our own city and country."

In late 2009, Abbotsleigh's Year 6 class used Polycom telepresence to embark on a virtual excursion to Antarctica. Students were able to see and interact with New Zealand researchers at the Scott Base to better-understand what life in Antarctica is really like. In the first year alone, Abbotsleigh organised approximately 30 such video link-ups.

Life-like, real-time interaction

A key factor driving widespread adoption is that Abbotsleigh's educators find Polycom telepresence easy to use and operate. They also appreciate the natural clarity and efficiency of face-to-face meetings with high definition (HD) voice, HD video and HD content sharing capabilities.

"Initially we began using [video conferencing] as a way to add a new dimension to classroom learning. Now we use it in a number of ways to extend classroom learning, but also to extend the resources and reach of the school."

Warwick Noble, IT Director of Abbotsleigh

“One of our imperatives is that we are preparing our students to be true global citizens and this technology allows us to reach well beyond Sydney’s north shore.”

Warwick Noble, IT Director of Abbotsleigh

“What is so good about the HD video conferencing is that the students are able to see and meet real people and see a new environment that they would not normally get the opportunity to experience. This adds another dimension to the topic they are studying and provides teachers with a highly engaging and immersive tool to help bring the lesson to life,” said Noble.

To supplement a Mandarin class, Abbotsleigh recently facilitated a video link with a classroom in Hong Kong. This provided an opportunity for Abbotsleigh students to practice language skills with a group of native Mandarin speakers, and also provided the added value of a cultural exchange. The session proved so successful that the classes are now linking up for fortnightly cultural exchanges that include dancing, singing and cooking classes.

The value of visual communications

While virtual excursions proved incredibly successful, Abbotsleigh’s student body and faculty have reaped additional rewards. “Initially we began using it as a way to add a new dimension to classroom learning,” said Noble. “Now we use it in a number of ways to extend classroom learning, but also to extend the resources and reach of the school.”

Staff development and inter-school collaboration are two areas that have significantly improved since the addition of visual communications. A new and more efficient connection has been established between Abbotsleigh’s geographically-separated junior and senior schools. Leveraging Polycom telepresence, distance no longer proves a hindrance and saves staffers and students time during the school day.

Additionally, to effectively communicate the value of visual communications to parents and other key stakeholders, the Abbotsleigh team posts recordings of all classroom sessions on the school’s intranet.

Abbotsleigh’s network is provided by AARNet, Australia’s Academic and Research Network. AARNet provides high-capacity, leading-edge internet services for the tertiary, secondary and primary education, as well as research sector communities and their research partners.

Polycom provides schools like Abbotsleigh with exclusive access to an extensive range of video-based content providers and resources from around the world.

As work continues to integrate visual collaboration technology into everyday school life, Abbotsleigh plans to become a content provider itself – extending the school’s profile and reach globally.

About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in standards-based unified communications (UC) solutions for telepresence, video, and voice powered by the Polycom® RealPresence™ Platform. The RealPresence Platform interoperates with the broadest range of business, mobile, and social applications and devices. More than 400,000 organizations trust Polycom solutions to collaborate and meet face-to-face from any location for more productive and effective engagement with colleagues, partners, customers, and prospects. Polycom, together with its broad partner ecosystem, provides customers with the best TCO, scalability, and security—on-premises, hosted, or cloud delivered.

For more information, visit www.polycom.com, call 1-800-POLYCOM, or contact your Polycom sales representative.

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