



Application Story

Minnesota State, Mankato

Minnesota State University, Mankato Supports Teacher and Administration Licensure Programs with e/pop® Web & Video Conferencing

The job of educating and supervising teachers- and administrators-in-training is a highly rewarding career. The training that student teachers and aspiring administrators receive at the pre- and post-graduate level has a tremendous impact on how well they transition into their careers to educate and guide children in our K-12 public school system.

Along with state requirements in which candidates seeking initial licensure must complete a student teaching experience, comes the requirement of supervision while in the classroom. Before suitable technology was available, supervisors traveled to the school site in order to observe the candidate in action. The role of the supervisor was to observe the candidate while sitting quietly in the back of the classroom and taking notes.

In some cases, the supervisor may drive hours just to either observe or meet with the candidate. It didn't take Minnesota State University, Mankato long to realize that there had to be a better way to supervise and interact with candidates and reduce the amount of time and cost needed for travel. Candidates completing initial licensure are observed a minimum of eight times, with each observation lasting 90 minutes. Although this sounds like a relatively simple task to accomplish, candidates could be up to two hours from Minnesota State Mankato.

Minnesota State Mankato, which is located in the south central region of the state, was founded in 1868. It has approximately 14,000 students from the U.S. and 71 countries around the globe. The Department of Education, one of six academic colleges, has integrated WiredRed's e/pop Web Conferencing into its administrator and initial licensure programs in order to simulate face-to-face observations, job performance reviews, and supervisory meetings. Loretta DeLong, an Associate Professor in the Educational Leadership Program, is responsible for supervising the internship program – a major requirement for aspiring school administrators and community and special education teachers. Each graduate student must complete a 320-hour internship for K-12 administration and a 200-hour internship for special education. Observing the students to make sure they are achieving program goals in the classroom and administrative office is imperative. After the IT department deployed e/pop, just prior to the Fall 2005 semester, DeLong started

Problem:

- Minnesota State, Mankato needed an alternative method of observing student teachers and administrators to eliminate driving time to and from school sites.

Solution:

- e/pop Web Conferencing, a full-featured, affordable, multiparty web and video conferencing solution

Business & IT Benefits:

- e/pop allows professors to observe, review and meet with licensure candidates remotely
- It has eliminated hours of travel to remote school sites
- The professors have introduced a new communication technology to student teachers and administrators and their K-12 students

implementing it into the Educational Leadership Program. She takes advantage of most of the features found in e/pop Web Conferencing, including multiparty video, audio and desktop and application sharing.

“I can do everything with e/pop that I would in person,” said DeLong. “It’s made the process of supervising the intern process so much easier, without the driving time. At the same time, I can also introduce a new technology to the students – I have actually incorporated it into the class syllabus. So not only are they learning to run school operations, they can take what they’ve learned about web conferencing technology with them as they start their careers.”

DeLong uses e/pop to meet in real-time with the supervising administrators, which may be located in separate buildings, and the students. Together, they review the intern’s Plan of Action, a plan that outlines the leadership competencies to be implemented during the internship along with the activities that must be accomplished to meet the competency requirements for the State of Minnesota. After the completion of the internship, DeLong can again meet with the students to review the documents that the student has prepared for their portfolio and they simultaneously review, edit and highlight the documents as they are discussed in preparation for the Portfolio Review.

“For me, the real benefit is that e/pop has totally eliminated the need for me to drive long distances, sometimes across the state, to meet with the students I am supervising,” said DeLong. “But there are other perks. With e/pop, there is no need to use the phone, which saves money for the university and intern’s school site. And also, introducing a new technology that will undoubtedly make my students jobs much easier once they make the transition into their careers is an added bonus.”

DeLong’s colleague in the College of Education, Scott Page, oversees and coordinates the graduate student licensure program. Like DeLong, Page faced similar obstacles, driving long distances to school sites. But Page is focused on helping teachers-in-training and those already teaching on limited licenses from the state. During the student teaching process, each candidate is observed a minimum of eight times, with a midterm and final conference. Each observation lasts approximately 90 minutes.

“In some cases, we are providing an alternative pathway to licensure for teachers already teaching with a limited license,” explains Page. “e/pop provides us with the platform for interacting, supervising and observing these teacher candidates in a way that doesn’t continually require driving out to the school.”

Currently, the program has students located throughout Minnesota, with the potential of attracting candidates from neighboring states. Page’s duties are far more focused on observing and critiquing teacher performance, as opposed to DeLong who is responsible for helping graduate students gain additional licensure for administration and special education positions. Page is now piloting e/pop Web Conferencing with plans to implement it in the Graduate Teacher Licensure program in the Fall semester, when professors, like Page, will observe 20-30 students at a time.

“The student I’m now observing is almost 2 hours away,” said Page. “e/pop has totally cut out all the driving time to get to the 90 minute observation session and we can now increase the number of observations, if necessary, because it is really not much different than being in the classroom.”

Page is utilizing e/pop Web Conferencing 4.2, a previous version that did not provide for Record & Playback of video sessions. After purchasing standard Sony Digital Camcorders, they were connected to the classroom PC enabling Page to drop in at anytime to observe the class after which the class sessions can be recorded and reviewed with the candidate at a later date. He also uses e/pop to review lesson plans and assessments that are shared and reviewed during meetings with the candidate teacher.

“The likelihood of driving up to Northern Minnesota, which is four to five hours away just wasn’t feasible – especially in the winter,” he added.

Minnesota State Mankato’s IT department easily deployed e/pop Web Conferencing on a Windows 2003 Enterprise Edition Server. e/pop is very CPU-efficient so in the case of Minnesota State Mankato, the school is able to run another service on the same server platform. Because e/pop runs efficiently on cable, DSL and T1 Internet connections, Page and DeLong are able to connect from Minnesota State Mankato’s Gigabit Internet connection to school districts that have varying bandwidth capabilities.

“After the IT department, myself and the College of Education Dean and department chairs observed e/pop we decided it had all the features we required in order to observe and supervise candidates within the initial licensure program,” said Page. “e/pop is very user-friendly and the candidates we observe are now able to introduce a relatively new and exciting communication technology to K-12 students as well.”

###