



Ross Local Schools #Better Together

Mitel & GBS

Pictured From Left to Right:
Scott Reinerr, Senior IT & Telephony Engineer, GBS;
Andy Klaber, Director of Technology Ross Local Schools District;
John Kinsel, Treasurer, Ross Local School District; Scott Gates, Superintendent of Schools, Ross Local School District;
Nick Enger, Senior Consultant, ATC; Alex Daily, IT Field Engineer, GBS

Written by John Connors
Photography by Catie Viox

During the warm summer days of 2017, Scott Gates, Superintendent of Schools at Ross Local School District, began having conversations with Andy Klaber, the district's Director of Technology, about the state of technology across the Ross School properties. One topic in that conversation began to raise serious concern for both Gates and Klaber. The district's telephone systems were old, different in different school buildings and beginning to show their age with periodic failure of system components. Klaber pointed out that power outages had taken key components down recently and could again. Worse still, the phone system equipment was out of warranty and support and the network lines and carrier services were out of date, expensive and had not been updated or re-negotiated in years.

The technology implications were clear to Klaber, but the situation raised different and serious concerns for Gates. He had come to Ross Local School District from a district that had experienced total failure of their phone systems in the middle of a school year. That failure had caused serious safety and communication problems. "Having lived it, I did not want another district to have to live through that," says Gates. This was an issue that needed to be resolved.

The Ross Local School District consists of 75 square miles in the southwest corner of Butler

County. The area is a mix of suburban and agricultural lifestyles and incorporates four small villages. Southwest of Hamilton and northwest of Cincinnati, the district has an enrollment of 3,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten through high school. There are four schools: Ross High School, Ross Middle School, and two elementary schools Elda and Morgan. Each has its own buildings and there are two administration buildings that make up the six-location campus. The school district is also the largest employer in the area with 315 district employees.



There were two other Ross area players who were key in addressing the telephony issue in the district. John Kinsel is the district's Treasurer, responsible for the district's purse strings and for obtaining approval for funding

from the district's board and by extension the community. The other, a Ross area business owner, had recently made significant upgrades to the communication network and phone systems supporting two of his businesses.

Asked about his approach to the telephone system replacement project Gates says, "I relied and depended on the knowledge and expertise of my Technology Director." Klaber, meanwhile, used his ability to network



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John Kinsel, Treasurer, Ross Local School District; Scott Gates, Superintendent of Schools, Ross Local School District; Nick Enger, Senior Consultant, ATC

in the technology community to connect with the Ross area business owner who strongly recommended Advanced Technology Consulting (ATC) and Nick Enger, ATC's Senior Consultant and Project Manager.

ATC is a Cincinnati-based, independent telecom and IT consulting firm that removes the complexities of researching, comparing, procuring, implementing and managing IT technologies and telecommu-

nications services for businesses, schools and municipalities. Founded in 1999, ATC works as a solution-agnostic consultant to pair clients with services that improve efficiency and productivity, and significantly reduce costs.



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Andy Klaber, Director of Technology, Ross Local School District; Scott Gates, Superintendent of Schools, Ross Local School District; Nick Enger, Senior Consultant, ATC

Speaking about ATC, Klaber says, "Nick Enger had the technical expertise, but more important, he took the time to build relationships. He listened. He learned our pain points, how important it was for us to have all of our buildings on one system, to have extension-to-extension calling and call roll-over, and far more efficient communication."

Kinsel adds, "ATC and Nick listened and did most of the work. Nick handled the whole bid process. We were the recipients of his leg work," Enger says. "ATC educated the Ross team. They knew the systems, features and cost trade-offs. They were armed

and knowledgeable when it came time to present to the board – it was an easy conversation." Gates said of the process, "I didn't have to get involved. I was looking for collaboration, compromise and accommodation. That happened every step of the way – there was no contention."

Ross chose a two-prong solution. The system – a Mitel Connect on-premise, unified communication and telephone system; as important, implementation and support through Global Business Solutions (GBS) with Scott Reinert as Senior IT & Telephony Engineer.

GBS is a leading, regional

IT-based technology solutions provider serving the needs of small-mid-sized businesses, government and school entities. The company stands apart from many competitors as the only Greater Cincinnati managed IT service provider who can deliver truly integrated solutions across a suite of technologies, and throughout the IT and digital landscape. GBS partners with Mitel, certified and authorized to implement and support systems and ensure customers can communicate how they want, when they want.

Once the Mitel system was selected by Ross over multiple other solutions, ATC and Enger



SLED TAKES CENTER STAGE

State and local governments and education (SLED) organizations rely heavily on IT to serve their citizens and students, while maintaining balanced budgets. Collectively, they represent over a \$100 billion annual SLED IT market with needs to be addressed in such segments as: Health and Human Services, Education, Transportation, Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Community Services, Environment, Legislature and Judiciary.

ATC has become a major player serving the SLED market. The company has demonstrated the ability to replicate their success in the commercial space at the state, local and education level. ATC has senior consultants and project managers with SLED-specific knowledge and experience working in the public sector that understand the challenges to success within the space. Case studies such as the Ross Local School District communications project demonstrate ATC's commitment to a solution agnostic, multi-bid approach necessary to address the regulations that govern the public sector environment.

Other than Ross Schools, ATC has an impressive portfolio of SLED clients including, but not limited to the City of Covington, Kenton County, Deerfield Township, Miami Township, Goshen Township, and Deer Park Township.

Long-term relationships and a focus on customer service and support have earned ATC a reputation for delivering the highest quality technology solutions that meet the needs of the many constituents in a SLED project.

Contact ATC (4ATC.com) to get a complete overview of their capabilities and commitment to state, local and education solutions, and to discuss the needs and requirements in your community.

turned over implementation project management to Scott Reinert from GBS. Reinert says, "When we decided to propose on the Ross Schools' phone system project, we initially saw it as a perfect opportunity." Klaber says, "Once we started moving forward, Scott was just awesome. Because of him I knew exactly what I had to do and when I had to do it – everything was laid out perfectly. Communication was always at the forefront."

Scott and Alex Dailey, GBS Field Engineer, worked closely with Klaber and the people who would use the new phone system. Site assessments were conducted at each location. No effort was spared to understand what people needed and wanted. Plans were developed, equipment and services were ordered. Timelines for installation and training were

put in place. Since the system would be installed in the weeks leading up to the August 2018 start of school, a train-the-trainer approach was taken. Emphasis was given to those functions and features that would be used right away and frequently. Twenty to thirty people received hands on training supplemented with documentation and videos. By the start of school, approximately 250-300 feature-rich handsets were installed in classrooms and offices in locations throughout the district. Klaber, Enger and Reinert all say implementation was very smooth with no major issues.

Reflecting on the benefits of the project and the new system, Gates and Kinsel can't say enough.

"Integration across all locations was critical. Safety for our



students and employees is greatly improved. 911 services have been vastly enhanced. The location of any call to 911 from any phone in the district is now immediately known and relayed to a broad list of people who need to know – administrators, school resources officers, etc. There is an immediate awareness of any crisis and availability for help and assistance,” says Gates. “The efficiency of communication is improved with voicemail, email, call roll-over and transferring, making so many jobs easier and more effective.”

Kinsel’s advice to other districts undertaking similar proj-

ects? “Don’t be short sighted. Don’t ask for less than what you need. You will have this system and its benefits for fifteen years, maybe longer. Ross has seen reduction of its telecommunication costs along with far superior functionality than before.”

#BetterTogether is a frequent hashtag in use at Ross Local School District. It is used to stress community among schools, students, teams and employees. Gates says “The new phone system has been a powerful enabler of #BetterTogether. The project, the way it was conducted, the relationships that have made it a success and the partnerships it

has forged are true examples of #BetterTogether.”

Advanced Technology Consulting is located at 8734 Union Centre Boulevard, West Chester, OH 45069. For more information, call 513.234.4778 or visit www.4atc.com

Global Business Solutions is located at 916 Monmouth Street, Newport, Kentucky. For more information, call 859.451.5900 or visit www.gbs-inc.com

Pictured Above:

*Lynn Korb,
Main Office
Secretary,
Ross High
School*