

Benton Community Schools deploy reliable wireless, gain visibility into connected devices and bandwidth

- ▶ 24 Meraki 802.11n APs increase network capacity and reliability, preparing school for 1:1 project
- ▶ Meraki Cloud Controller provides centralized management over wireless networks at high school, middle school, and four elementary schools, without onsite hardware
- ▶ Fast deployment and automatic firmware updates simplify single IT administrator's job

A 1:1 project is on the horizon at Benton Community Schools, says Technology Director Tyler Maschino – and in the meantime the school is using carts full of laptops, all relying on wireless access. The students use the Internet for research, watch educational videos on YouTube, and perform dissections online.

“It was clear we needed more capacity, more reliability, and a better way to quickly view what was happening on the wireless network,” Maschino said. As the only IT person on staff, he knew he also needed a solution that was easy to manage.

Benton Community Schools in Van Horne, Iowa includes a high school, a middle school, and four elementary schools, and supports 1600 students and 170 teachers and staff. The schools previously relied on consumer-grade access points (APs), but Maschino said the APs were unreliable, had insufficient capacity, and had to be managed individually.

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*- Tyler Maschino, Technology Director,
Benton Community Schools*

After receiving a recommendation for Meraki from Infrastructure Technology Solutions, Maschino tested Meraki at the high school. He was so pleased with Meraki's ease of deployment and intuitive centralized management, he quickly expanded to the rest of the schools and deployed 24 Meraki 802.11n access points in total.

The deployment process was straightforward, Maschino said. A walkthrough of each building gave him a general idea of where to place the APs, and deploying each AP took less than five minutes. “The configuration is all automated, so I don't have to do anything besides plug it in,” he said. “Each access point even knows which



channels it can use relative to the other access points.”

Once the APs were in place, Maschino used the web-based Meraki dashboard to check usage and add additional APs to high-use areas. “I use the dashboard all the time to view what is going on,” he said. “I can see that my access points at every location are working, what devices are attached to each AP, and which areas get the most use. It's a fabulous tool – it gives me a lot of control.”

In particular, Meraki gives him visibility into devices that are using too much bandwidth. “With the dashboard, I can even sort the list of connected devices by how much bandwidth each device is using,” he said. He can then block particular devices or use integrated Meraki traffic shaping to limit the use of particular applications.

Since deploying Meraki, Maschino says he doesn't get complaints about the wireless anymore. “It's outstanding - the less my phone rings, the more successful we are,” he said. At the same time, he appreciates that the access points take care of themselves, automatically updating when new updates are available. “I literally do not have to worry about that kind of stuff. It's all fantastic.”



Maschino deployed the majority of Benton's APs at the high school.