

# Bedford County Schools Implements Video Conferencing

The following story was shared by Joan Gray,  
Director of Technology, Bedford County Schools

## Executive Summary

### Client Name:

Bedford County Schools

### Location:

Bedford County, Tennessee

### Inspiration:

Tandberg Roadshow

### Funding:

Grants and District Match

### Technology:

- H.323 Videoconferencing
- Units -room based and portable

### Implementation:

#### Student Content

- Found on [www.cilc.org](http://www.cilc.org)
- Funded through a CILC Content Dollar Bank
- Aligned to Student Performance Indicators

#### Collaborations

- CILC Training
- Outside to Texas
- Within county - first grade classes from two schools

#### Meetings

- Tennessee Educational Technology Association
- Tennessee Distance Learning Association
- Tennessee State Department of Education

#### Professional Development

- Internal for testing procedures and security
- CILC teacher workshops
- Learning strategies from content providers

#### Next Steps

- Engaging more teachers
- Increased access to PD
- Sustaining funding for student content
- Sharing the responsibilities

## The Inspiration

In the spring of 2010, the TANDBERG Roadshow rolled into Bedford County, Tennessee. Joan Gray, Bedford County Schools' Director of Technology, went out to see what the hoopla was all about. Her interest was piqued enough to lead her principals and superintendent out to the van as well.

After experiencing the power of video conferencing first hand, Joan led her district to 'jump' into the video conferencing arena. They set two overarching goals.

1. To enable their rural students to learn from people outside their county and from the world at large by communicating, connecting, collaborating with them.
2. To extend the use the district's bandwidth beyond connecting to the Internet.

## The Funding

Within a year, Bedford County Schools had received enough funding from the following sources to make their vision a reality.

- The USDA Perkins Grant
- The Federal DOE Literacy Grant
- The USDA RUS Grant

## The Technology

Working with [Personal Computer Systems \(PCS\), INC.](#), (Knoxville, Tennessee), they used these monies to purchase equipment for their 14 schools.

- Each school received one to three portable videoconferencing units, each consisting of a 60" screen on a rolling cart, enabling them to be used anywhere in the building.
- A presentation system, complete with a Promethean Board, was installed in the central office.
- Using their match for the RUS Grant, they created a studio with 3 screens and 4 cameras in the largest high school.

## The Implementation

### Student Content

PCS also introduced Bedford County Schools to [CILC](#), the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration. CILC's website provided access

to student programming from across the nation and around the world. CILC's [consulting services](#) helped Joan set up a [Content Dollar Bank](#) to provide seed money for each school to purchase this content. Parameters were set to maintain educational integrity: each purchased program must be connected to the districts' Student Performance Indicators (SPI). In addition, CILC training helped all teachers create their own free membership on the CILC website and taught them how to search for programs to meet their curricular needs.

Joan says, "CILC is just wonderful! They helped so much with organizing our procedures for requesting/ordering programs."

With a system in place for payment and educational alignment of the content, teachers began integrating this content into their everyday curricula. The students have participated in wonderful, interactive programs from the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, NASA, Vanderbilt Virtual Schools, and many others!



One program in particular stood out as an incredible example of the interactivity experienced in these programs. The provider had sent a list of materials needed for the program to the teacher ahead of time. During the program groups of students were called to the front of the room where they performed experiments along with the presenter. Gray said, "It was like having another teacher with specific expertise in this area in the room."

### **Collaborations**

CILC consultant, [Doug Meyer](#), helped Bedford County Schools begin to explore other avenues for connections, including collaborations.

### **Reaching Outside the County**



Two small marketing classes at the vocational high schools banded together to shared strategies for economics with two other schools, one in Texas and one in New York. At the end of their time together one young man from Texas actually taught a Bedford County student to Line Dance!

### **Connecting Within the County**

First grade students in Shelbyville, TN and from 30 miles outside Shelbyville, connected to take turns sharing their projects. The event went so well that the teachers currently set a time each month for their classes to connect.

### **Meetings**

- *Tennessee Educational Technology Association* ([TETA](#))  
As chair of TETA, Joan has engaged PCS's bridge to connect her 12 board members to for their annual February meeting. The members have saved time and the association has saved \$4,000-\$5,000 this year in travel expenses!

- *Tennessee Distance Learning Association (TNDLA)*  
Tennessee now has its own very active chapter of the [United States Distance Learning Association](#) (USDLA). Their 30 or so members meet once a month via videoconferencing.
- *Tennessee State Department Of Education*  
The [Tennessee's DOE](#) has recently purchased its own videoconferencing equipment. Districts hope they will use this technology instead of webinars to share information with principals, superintendents and supervisors.

### **Professional Development**

“The use of videoconferencing for Professional Development is a bit more complex and can be viewed from three different perspectives,” shares Joan.

#### **1. Within the County**

The Bedford County Schools Testing Director used to drive to each of the 14 schools to train staff on procedures and security for testing. This year, using the district's bridge and content server, she delivered training from the central office via videoconferencing to 8 to 10 schools simultaneously. Teachers who missed the training could access it after the fact through the content server. The district saved time and money while accommodating the needs of all staff, even those who could not make the scheduled sessions.

#### **2. From Outside the County**

CILC workshops and training have been delivered to groups of teachers/staff via videoconferencing, again saving the travel dollars usually paid to outside consultants.

#### **3. From Content Provider Programs**

Joan shares that teachers are more apt to utilize a new teaching/learning strategy once they see it successfully implemented. “That is what these programs have done for our teachers. The level of instruction and leadership demonstrated is amazingly high. Presenters are doing an excellent job of interacting with students, even correcting them when needed. They only thing they cannot do is walk next to each student at their desk! It has definitely made a difference for our teachers as they are now trying some of these strategies in their own classrooms.”

### **Next Steps**

#### **• Engaging More Teachers**

A core group of 10-15 teachers at each school has embraced videoconferencing.

Bedford's new goal is to move beyond the core groups and enable videoconferencing to become as integral a part of the classroom as the Internet. Thus, they are creating processes to make using videoconferencing easy and dependable. Due to scheduling and the multiple classes each teacher addresses, high school poses its own set of issues for integrating student content. Creative solutions will be needed to move forward in this area.

- Increasing Access to Professional Development**  
Common Core Standards, new to Bedford County Schools, will result in different types of tests than in the past. Much professional development will be needed to move this forward. Professional development will be needed from in-house staff as well as from experts in the marketplace. Joan realizes that “if more professional development experts would use videoconferencing, it would save travel dollars and make a huge difference in what we can afford to do.”
- Sustainability for Student Content**  
Individual schools will need to find dollars to sustain the use of student content. While the teachers see the value in this content, the value needs to be great enough for schools to adapt their individual budgets; to create a line item for student content or find an alternative way to fund it.
- Sharing the Responsibility**  
Implementing videoconferencing has created an extra load on the already overloaded technology director. Joan says, “I’m going in too many directions.”  
Perhaps a Coordinator of Distance Learning for the district? CILC also has some strategies to help in this area. Creating Site Coordinators teams at each building can not only save money, but also establish a strong buy in within each building and help ensure sustainability.

## In Closing

Taking a high view of this endeavor, Joan shares, “This has been better than I thought it would be. It caught on much more than I thought it might! What a nice surprise!”

## Backgrounds

### Joan Gray

Joan Gray taught in English in the classroom for 35 years. She has been the Technology Director for Bedford County Schools for the last 10 years.

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### Bedford County Schools

[Bedford County Schools](#) is a medium sized, rural district located 50 miles south of Nashville, Tennessee. Its 14 schools and 650 teachers serve 8000 students. [Map It.](#)