

Case Study

Prince William County Schools Build New Digital Broadcast Operation Around Snell Solutions



Snell routing, automation, and master control solutions anchor station's migration to digital broadcasting.

The Customer

PWCS-TV is the dedicated television channel for Virginia-based Prince William County Public Schools. The station can be found on the Comcast Cable System and on Channel 36 in the Verizon FiOS line-up, and is streamed live from www.pwcstv.com. The station offers a wide variety of educational and entertainment programming that targets the entire community of learners in Prince William County, Virginia - students, teachers, parents, and school division staff.

Students tune in for distance learning programs such as NASA Connect and The Performing Arts Series; take part in Electronic Field Trips produced by Ball State University's E3, the Prince William Network, and Colonial Williamsburg; or watch informational programs designed especially for students and parents

including Teen/Kid News and Education News Parents Can Use. PWCS-TV is also an excellent resource for information about the Prince William County Public Schools. Produced by the school division, programs such as School Focus and Inside Education highlight initiatives, programs, and award-winning staff and students from across the county. PWCS-TV is programmed and operated by Prince William County Public Schools Office of Media Production Services.

The Challenge

Broadcasting 24/7, PWCS-TV targets a diverse audience of parents, students, and employees throughout Prince William County, with a variety of locally produced programming as well as live satellite feeds and other content. When the school district recently moved to a new administration building, PWCS-TV used the opportunity to build a new broadcasting facility from the ground up to facilitate its transition from analog to digital operations.

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The station worked with Snell reseller The Whitlock Group to evaluate solutions from a range of vendors: a primary requirement was a broadcast workflow architecture that would integrate easily with its Omneon media server and other components in the new digital infrastructure.

The Snell Solution

Equipping this new facility, Snell has integrated state-of-the-art routing, automation, and master control solutions. The Snell equipment, including a Sirius router, the Morpheus automation system, and a Masterpiece master control switcher, provides a seamless routing, control, and playout infrastructure that has greatly improved the station's quality levels.

At the heart of PWCS-TV's new digital operation is a 256x256 Snell Sirius router, which handles both HD and SD signals with embedded audio. The Snell Morpheus automation system provides seamless playout of all content elements for both PWCS-TV channels. In addition, PWCS-TV has implemented a Snell Masterpiece master control switcher and several modules from Snell's modular infrastructure range, which handle a variety of tasks such as analog-to-digital and digital-to-analog conversion, audio processing, up- and down-conversion, and video processing.

The Results

Working closely with customer and The Whitlock Group, Snell designed, integrated and commissioned an integrated system that provides significant improvements in broadcast quality and workflow efficiency at an affordable price. Snell ensured that PWCS-TV's digital migration was straightforward and had no negative impacts on the station's broadcast operations during the transition phase.

Snell's broadcast production solution offers considerable potential for future development of PWCS-TV including a clear roadmap to HD whenever that is appropriate.

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"PWCS-TV is a good example of the types of challenges our broadcasting customers face as they transition to digital operations. The station needed a one-stop shop that could offer a comprehensive solution set for routing and control, that would be interoperable with other critical master control elements," said Neil Maycock, chief marketing officer for Snell. "No other vendor is better positioned to meet these types of requirements than Snell."

