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IVCi Customer Profile: One Stop Richmond Hill Community Center Video Conferencing Field Trips Transform New York City Students

By Nina Parker

New York State funded One Stop Richmond Hill Community Center needed a way to bring subject matter experts from all over the world into its classroom. To achieve this, the Community Center partnered with industry expert IVCi to implement a TANDBERG video conferencing solution that was reliable and easy to use. As children became comfortable using the technology, their communication skills increased and their self-confidence grew.

The Challenge

The educators at the One Stop Richmond Hill Community Center believe the best way for their New York City elementary school students to learn subjects like environmental and space science is by experiencing the lessons firsthand from subject matter experts. These specialists in their fields teach students by engaging them in live demonstrations and question and answer sessions that are valuable additions to the usual classroom lesson plans.

To access subject matters experts, teachers can organize field trips to off site locations, or arrangements can be made to bring an expert to the learning facility. However, due to budgetary, scheduling, or transportation limitations these options may not always be available. The Community Center needed an alternative way to bring subject matter experts from all over the world into its classroom.



The Solution

The educators at the Community Center recognized the value that video conferencing could bring to their classroom. As a two-way interactive technology, it would be the most efficient way for students to learn from experts who were dispersed throughout the United States and other countries. Community Center President Simcha Waisman procured funding from state elected officials for both summer programs and a year long after school program called "Computer Technology and Video Conferencing" to provide video conferencing field trips to the students at no cost to the community.

The Center's Program Administrator Neme Alperstein chose industry expert IVCi to provide guidance on selecting a solution that would be reliable and easy to use. "We needed as few technical problems as possible so that we could get directly to the subject matter," she said. "I don't want to have to do technical trouble shooting; I just want to do a video conference with content."

To help Ms. Alperstein achieve successful video calls, IVCi installed a TANDBERG Profile 3000 MXP with a document camera for presentations. The TANDBERG solution is fully interoperable with the video conferencing equipment located at the other end points, which allows effective communication between different systems. Prior to installation, IVCi worked with the Community Center to make sure the video traffic would securely traverse its firewall. After the system was installed, IVCi provided extensive training to ensure the equipment would be fully utilized. The Community Center chose IVCi's Managed Care services, which includes support from IVCi's call center and its technical help desk.

The Results

The solution provided by IVCi played a significant part in the success of the summer program, since it allowed Ms. Alperstein to focus on the quality of each virtual field trip and not on the technology. She arranged for students to learn about marine life by exploring the Great Barrier Reef in Australia with an experienced diver. They also met with scientists at NASA, who demonstrated the effect that microgravity has on water with footage of a water balloon popping aboard the space station.

Ms. Alperstein made sure that the students were well prepared for each video call in advance. She taught each child how to introduce themselves, and how to formulate a question so as to make the most of the time given with the experts.

The students' growing comfort using the technology led to the development of better communication skills and greater self confidence. "By the end of the program, the students were accustomed to presenting their material. They now understand how to use the technology. There is a whole different persona of the child that comes out," Ms. Alperstein said. "As the kids rehearse, they become more confident. With interactivity, we watch the transformation. In three weeks we saw a complete change."