

GROSSE POINTE PUBLIC SCHOOLS INVEST IN DARK FIBER, FUTURE

New Fiber Network Connects School System, Supports Initiatives, Allows for Growth

Home to more than 7,600 K-12 students, Grosse Pointe Public School System entered the 2020-2021 academic year with a fiber network infrastructure as the final puzzle piece needed to launch a comprehensive technology upgrade that will deliver next-generation educational tools to — and grow with — its students, faculty and staff for years to come.

“We have the bandwidth now to be able to do anything inside our buildings that technology can provide for us.”

Dr. Gary Niehaus, Superintendent
Grosse Pointe Public School System

Located east of Detroit, Michigan, along nearby Lake St. Clair, Grosse Pointe Public School System serves the cities of Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Park, Grosse Pointe Farms, Grosse Pointe Shores, Grosse Pointe Woods and a portion of Harper Woods. In fall 2020, Everstream completed a 41-route-mile fiber ring connecting Grosse Pointe Public School System’s 14 schools and Wayne State University in Detroit’s Midtown area.

“Everstream did everything they were supposed to do — from being on time with the construction schedule to the make ready being well done. We didn’t have any glitches,” said Gary Niehaus, Ph.D., Superintendent, Grosse Pointe Public School System.

GPPSS’s fiber network includes 60 strands of Dark Fiber, a 10 Gbps Dedicated Internet Access connection — more than triple its previous internet speed of 3 Gbps — and supports a number of initiatives the Grosse Pointe Public School System had in progress.

“In November 2018, the district passed a \$111 million bond referendum. Within the referendum, approximately \$18 million



The Grosse Pointe Public School System Administrative Offices



Grosse Pointe Public School System

Customer since 2020

SERVICES PROVIDED

Dark Fiber
Dedicated Internet Access

CHALLENGES

Limited Capacity
Technology Challenges

OUTCOMES

High Capacity
Diverse Connections

was earmarked for technology infrastructure upgrades, including new cable inside the buildings, new fire alarms and access doors, new bell systems, smart boards and other improvements,” said Dr. Niehaus.

PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE TODAY

Grosse Pointe Public School System’s new network supports the district’s high-tech learning and curriculum goals, and happened to come just in time to support remote learning needs.

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In the summer of 2020, GPPSS kicked off a three-year initiative to update its entire computer and network infrastructure with a focus on mobility and added new Smart Board interactive displays, Chromebooks and Zoom capabilities to each school.

The district also adopted Schoology, a virtual learning environment and social networking service for K-12 schools, as its online learning management system, providing teachers, students and parents with a single application for lesson planning, student assignments, submitting homework, administering tests and gradebooks.

“Having our own dark fiber, which now allows us to connect to MISEN, Wayne County RESA or downtown to Wayne State University, positions us as being bigger and broader than our own boundaries,” said Dr. Niehaus. “For example, livestreaming could be a more popular option because now we have the horsepower to do it.”

OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

Previously, Grosse Pointe Public School System consistently used 2 Gbps, or two-thirds, of its 3 Gbps network connection and did not have the capability to scale to meet its strategic objectives.

While the 10 Gbps network connection will need to be upgraded eventually, GPPSS believes this amount of bandwidth allows the district an opportunity to level set — providing its students and teachers with access comparable to what other districts have implemented.

“We have the bandwidth now to be able to do anything inside our buildings that technology can provide for us. The dark fiber gives us a foundation from which to build and I think it’s up to our creativity now to make it work,” Dr. Niehaus said.

One suggestion is the possibility of a dual enrollment program with Wayne State University.

“If we’re connected to Wayne State University, is there a way we could trade virtually — trade students, trade curriculum, trade courses? We’ve looked at dual credit, but it’s not always possible for students to attend Wayne State in person,” Dr. Niehaus explained. “Could we establish a virtual classroom where our students could attend one of their dual enrollment courses remotely? I think that’s an avenue to explore.”

With Everstream’s high-capacity fiber network, GPPSS can increase bandwidth when needed, scaling its network quickly and easily to meet future demands. The district’s agreement also includes 20 years of fiber maintenance as Everstream owns the balance of the 288-count fiber located within the same sheath as GPPSS’s 60 strands.

“I’m really looking forward to working with Everstream. I think this is a great partnership for our community,” Dr. Niehaus added.