



St. John's Lutheran School Maintains 100% Enrollment Using Avaya Spaces



Avaya Spaces™ for an Immersive Learning Experience

With COVID-19 lingering for the remainder of 2020, school administrators are recognizing that today's new normal is hardly temporary. The challenges of shifting to a remote learning model are clear, with teachers at some schools across the U.S. reporting that fewer than half of their students are participating in online learning¹. Then there's Matthew Kamien, Principal at St. John's Lutheran School in a Chicago suburb. Using Avaya Spaces, he successfully transitioned his entire student body (grades pre-school through 8) to an immersive online learning program within one week of the state's shelter in place orders. The online experience has been so great that the overwhelming majority of parents said they would be happy with the quality of their child's education should the school permanently transition to remote learning. With such success, the school has decided to continue full-time online learning to start the 2020-2021 academic year.

Avaya Spaces enabled St. John's to quickly implement a simple, single, user-friendly solution that students, teachers, and administrators could use on any device without the need to install and maintain software. Beyond education, St. John's is using the platform for board meetings, and faculty meetings. "I've always considered myself a pioneer of new technology and ideas for educating, but COVID-19 was a challenge beyond anything I could have imagined. It wasn't about just using a video solution to see each other. It was about moving operations entirely online," Kamien explained. "Having the Avaya OneCloud™ solution with Avaya Spaces allowed our school and parish to continue its feeling of connected family and community. When seeking a solution, this was paramount. It is who we have been for over 150 years."



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Like schools around the world, St. John’s was challenged with having to find a solution for distance learning in a matter of days. Yet many of the solutions Kamien looked at had hang-ups. Some required entering an email address, which younger students didn’t know how to do. Other solutions had time limits, which interrupted lessons and required users to log back in. For Kamien, Avaya Spaces ticked all the boxes. “There were no time limits, no need to get permissions, and we had an easy link to click on. Boom, done.” St. John’s took advantage of the free trial offered from Avaya and then moved to purchase licenses because everyone was so pleased.

Any concerns Kamien had about teachers or parents who were not tech savvy vanished once they tried the platform. He personally took the time to introduce the solution to staff members who needed help, and they quickly saw the simplicity in setting up classrooms virtually. “Teachers and students can do anything that they normally would in the classroom. Our educators have the freedom to create custom lesson plans to meet students’ specific interests and needs, which helped us pick right up where we left off when the state shut down.”

Teachers can set up a separate “space” for each classroom where they can attach assignments, have persistent chat, hold classes, and more. The space is always there, whether class is in session or not. Teachers can also set passwords if needed to maximize security, with the ability to change passwords on the fly in case someone needs to be removed from the space.

“Some teachers share PowerPoint presentations using the platform. Others use the screen share capability to present to students in real-time. Many are taking advantage of sharing links and files using real-time chat. Teachers can email students exams and monitor them using video conferencing. One of our math teachers actually had two sessions set up at the same time. She was monitoring her 8th graders while they were finishing an exam while simultaneously teaching 7th graders on her laptop.”

“I already had so much on my plate, I didn’t have time to be the IT administrator,” Kamien said. “Parents, teachers and even the youngest students found the experience to be simple and seamless; they quickly caught on. And the quality of education continued to meet our high standards. Through all of this, we were still seeing advanced 7th graders placing in high school classes for 8th grade and our 8th graders placing into honors classes.”



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After school programs such as STEM and Spanish Club were able to continue, unlike many other school districts. The school even created “virtual dress up” events including sports week, first responder’s day, and St. John’s spirit wear day. Kamien also used Avaya Spaces to record morning announcements to start the school day on a positive note. The ability for St. John’s to run school activities as it had pre-pandemic provided routine and normalcy during a time of great uncertainty.

“Avaya Spaces is giving students the ability to express themselves differently”

Unlike many other schools, St. John’s educators meet with students Monday through Friday for remote learning. This consistency, combined with the school’s small classroom sizes, delivers on the critical social and emotional needs of students.

“Avaya Spaces enabled what I call ‘social seeing.’ Many made new friends and connected outside of school hours to socialize virtually. I think our approach is helping to support the emotional wellbeing of our students as well as their academic instruction,” said Kamien. For those in upper grades, there was sharing of social media information to connect outside of the classroom. For those in lower grades, Avaya Spaces involved a daily “show and tell” of bedrooms, pets, and favorite toys. “For the little ones, it is a special place where they get daily social interaction.”

Avaya Spaces has given students at St. John’s who generally don’t have a voice in the classroom an ability to express themselves differently. “Some students who were typically quiet or not engaged came out of their shells,” Kamien said. “Upper grade teachers reported that classmates who don’t speak up as much now are using the platform. Using chat, students can send answers to questions privately to their teacher instead of in front of the whole classroom. That’s been helpful for those who are nervous in case they get a question wrong. The kids also have a bit more freedom to move around, which has helped improve their learning and development.”

Setting the Standard for Immersive Online Learning

With less than 100 students total, St. John’s Lutheran School could have easily implemented social distancing in accordance with state guidelines. Kamien invested in Avaya Spaces to provide students and staff the safest learning environment possible. “By and large, parents have expressed that our remote learning experience is much better than other schools,” he said. “We started the school year off virtually in August and haven’t had any technical roadblocks. We’re looking forward to going back virtually in the fall.”



We appreciate all of the staff and the adjustments they continually make and wanted to show our gratitude for them and their creative uses of Avaya Spaces. Together, we've proven just how much can be achieved."

Kamien loved Avaya Spaces so much that he created t-shirts for all of the teachers to wear. It reads: I will teach you at any place, I will teach you now on Avaya Space. I will teach you in my house, I will teach you with a mouse. I will teach you here or there. I will teach you because I care. "We appreciate all of the staff and the adjustments they continually make and wanted to show our gratitude for them and their creative uses of Avaya Spaces. Together, we've proven just how much can be achieved."

"By and large, parents have expressed that our remote learning experience is much better than other schools. We didn't miss a beat and continued to deliver the best possible education."

About St. John's Lutheran School

The school was established in 1849, the same year as the church. It has been in continuous existence ever since. The first pastor was also the first teacher until another teacher was hired. The first school building was a one room schoolhouse which was later made into a two room schoolhouse. The school has an excellent reputation in the area. The church reflects the diversity of the area. We seek to serve the community in a manner pleasing to our Lord. Learn more at sjch.com

¹<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/us/coronavirus-schools-attendance-absent.html>

About Avaya

Businesses are built by the experiences they provide, and every day millions of those experiences are delivered by Avaya Holdings Corp. (NYSE: AVYA). Avaya is shaping what's next for the future of work, with innovation and partnerships that deliver game-changing business benefits. Our cloud communications solutions and multi-cloud application ecosystem power personalized, intelligent, and effortless customer and employee experiences to help achieve strategic ambitions and desired outcomes. Together, we are committed to help grow your business by delivering Experiences that Matter. Learn more at www.avaya.com.