



Christ Episcopal School gives its students an optimal education—whether in person or remote

When Bob Krieger arrived at Christ Episcopal School (CES) in Covington, Louisiana, in 2017 as the new IT administrator, he found a school in desperate need of a technology overhaul. There were whiteboards with projectors, a few older panels, a lot of computers running Windows® 7—basically a mishmash of stuff, most of which had been purchased around the time of Hurricane Katrina 12 years earlier.

At first, Krieger didn't have time to think about upgrading. He was too busy getting the network

infrastructure up and running, putting in security cameras, and sorting out the multiple Wi-Fi® systems. And of course, there were the constant requests to replace projector bulbs, which cost \$200 each. Krieger questioned why the school was investing precious funds in outdated equipment.

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— Bob Krieger

According to Krieger, the attitude was: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” But as a retired Navy officer, he found that approach unacceptable. “In the military, you make sure things are upgraded to the latest and the greatest, because you never know when you’re going to need it.” Little did he know at the time, that commitment to preparing for any eventuality would be a major boon for the school when the unexpected actually did happen in the spring of 2020.

Once they touched those screens, teachers were hooked

In December of 2019, a few months before the global pandemic hit in March, Krieger and two CES teachers attended an education technology

conference in New Orleans. When he took the teachers to Promethean’s booth to try out the ActivPanel®, he was delighted by their response: “They came, they saw, they touched, they played,” recalled Krieger. “They loved it.”

The school got a couple demo units, and Krieger encouraged all of the teachers to stop by after school to try them out. “They were worried about touching the board because they were afraid it would break,” he recalled. “I told them, ‘Don’t worry, it’s a demo unit. It doesn’t belong to me so you can break it all you want!’” he joked. Krieger knew how durable the panels were, and he also knew that once teachers touched those screens, they’d want one of their own. And he was right.



"The kids love it, they really do, They call it the giant iPad."

- Justine Andersen

The next hurdle was cost. "I wanted to outfit all the classrooms—from kindergarten to 12th grade," explained Krieger. "That's a lot of classrooms, and that's a lot of money." Working with Promethean partner AXI Education Solutions, Krieger got excellent pricing and financing terms, and the school's administration was willing and able to find the funds to pay for the new technology.

Easy to use, full of features, and dependable

The ActivPanels arrived in CES's classrooms during the summer of 2020, just in time to greet teachers who were returning to in-person learning after a spring term spent struggling with the challenges of teaching remotely. "It was almost like here, have a present that may actually help you," said Krieger. "It made them happy to come to school."

"I was really excited," recalled Madelaine Bryant, a high school science teacher at CES. "Just to be able to use the features and go beyond what we had before. It's much more interactive." While Bryant described herself as "not super tech-savvy," she said it took her only "a day or two" to get comfortable with her panel. "Bob showed me how to log into it and then that was all," she said. "It was very intuitive and easy to pick up."

For Bryant, one of the best features of the ActivPanel is that it has everything she needs—"all the software is right there." She appreciates staying at the panel throughout her lesson rather than stopping to go back to her computer.

"It saves time because you don't have to switch back and forth—you have everything right there and ready." Also important to Bryant? Dependability. "It works all the time," she said. "I've never had it not work when I needed it. That alone has been a huge plus."

Justine Andersen, a fifth-grade math teacher, pointed to the infinite whiteboard, the ability to annotate directly on the panel, screen sharing, and the seamless integration with Google Classroom as some of her favorite features. And since her students love the ActivPanel as much as she does, she uses the spinner to decide who gets to come up to the board next. "The kids love it, they really do," said Andersen. "They call it the giant iPad."

Whether in class, hybrid, or remote—the panels are key

While most CES students have returned to in-person learning, some have opted to stay remote. The panels have been an enormous help for teachers to connect with those students, particularly with the screen sharing capability. But rather than simply sharing what's on her screen with her students, Bryant prefers to use Google Meet™ and position her computer to face the ActivPanel and herself, so the kids at home can feel like they're right there in the classroom. "They need to see my face, they need to see my reaction to their questions," she explained. "It's more of a personal interaction."

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CES faculty and staff are acutely aware that their current hybrid model could switch back to virtual learning at any time, so they're preparing their students for that possibility. Kindergarten teacher Reve Pounds said she's using her panel to teach her young students how to use the Seesaw app in a remote environment. "So worst-case scenario, if we have to go to home learning again, they will have had those lessons in the classroom about how to use the app and access it at home," she explained. Pounds and her fellow teachers are relieved that they'll be allowed into the school to conduct their classes with their panels in the event there's a return to remote learning.

For Krieger, what matters most is that teachers and students are actually using their ActivPanel to engage students. "That was one of my big worries—that they'd have it but just do nothing but play YouTube™ videos," he confessed. "But that's not what they're doing." Instead, they're using the panels in ways he could never have imagined. "When I walk past classrooms and look in, and there's writing on the panels, there's music being played, there's a virtual fireplace. It really makes my heart feel good."



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