



## In the midst of tragedy, a school district finds hope

If there's anyone able to see the silver linings amidst tragedy, it's Frank Cambas. As the technology director for Jefferson Parish Schools in Louisiana, he was there to help pick up the pieces after Hurricane Katrina, which had a devastating impact on the district's schools, faculty and staff, and students and their families.

"With Katrina came many people who wanted to help and support getting things put back together for the entire area," explained Cambas. Cisco® stepped up to bring the latest and greatest technology into the schools, along with a whole host of partners, including Promethean.

It's something that simply wouldn't have happened if not for that natural disaster.

Fifteen years later, Jefferson Parish experienced a different sort of crisis: the COVID-19 pandemic. Suddenly, school buildings closed, forcing teachers and students to find new ways to teach and learn remotely.

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And when schools opened back up in the fall, they had to deal with the unique challenges of hybrid learning.

Once again, however, out of misfortune came reward. Cambas had been trying for years to refresh the district's technology, but like it is for most school districts, money was an issue. "There was a brick wall, and I couldn't go through it," he recalled. No matter how many proposals he came up with, nothing seemed to work. Until the federal CARES Act was passed, which brought a windfall of funds that could be used to purchase the new technology that Jefferson Parish Schools so desperately needed.

## Quality, support, and training— Promethean's complete solution

When it came time for Cambas to choose which interactive panel to purchase for his massive district refresh, the decision was easy: [ActivPanel](#). Cambas had been using Promethean products

since those post-Katrina days, when he had several companies present their technology solutions to district leadership. "The Promethean product was hands down superior to any of the other products that were offered," he said. Cambas even went so far as to ask to see a panel that had been completely taken apart. "I could tell by the way it was put together that it was a quality product."

Cambas was also impressed by Promethean's dedicated customer support. "They gave us a sense of support that was readily available," he explained. "There's not been anything that I've ever requested from Promethean that has not been achieved. I'm so appreciative of that." Over the years, Cambas has developed close relationships with his Promethean representative and his local reseller, AXI Education Solutions.

Another essential aspect of the Promethean solution has been the training provided to



teachers. Cambas has seen the company's professional development offering transform from a somewhat "cookie-cutter approach" in the beginning to an extensive program that recognizes that each district is unique. He appreciates how teachers can learn with online videos and tutorials at their own pace and on their own time, "including being able to be in their pajamas with a glass of wine, if they so desire," he joked.

From the beginning, Cambas and the district placed a major emphasis on professional development and required teachers to demonstrate their ability to use their panels. Along with AXI, they created a comprehensive training program with varying levels of mastery, a training manual, and knowledge tests that must be passed to earn a certificate. Once a certificate was earned, it was placed in a clear plastic holder and posted outside the teacher's classroom, "so they could show it with pride," said Cambas.

## Technology for the present and the future

Schools began receiving their new ActivPanels in December 2020, and it's typically taken them just a day to get installed, up and running, and put to use by teachers, who are thrilled with their new tools. "It's like Christmas," marveled Cambas. "You know, there's not a whole lot for teachers to smile about now. It's hard work. They're challenged," he said. "But when I see their faces and listen to them. Wow. They're genuinely so pleased and happy to have the technology they need to be able to do their job."

Cambas is confident that the district's new panels will not only last far into the future but will remain useful no matter which way the trends go in education. "The COVID scenario is moving us so

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much more quickly towards virtual learning. The current panel is capable of keeping up with what the need is," he said. "Teachers are able to teach in the way they now must. Being able to handle the virtual students at home while face to face with students in the class. I think that's very impressive."

Having worked in education for nearly 50 years, Cambas has had his share of highs and lows. "Like everybody, I have dreams that ended up in the junkpile wherever dreams die," he said. But in a strange twist of fate, the pandemic has been able to revive one of his most passionate dreams: To bring the best technology to every single classroom in his district. "COVID has actually led to rainbows, a chance to follow the sun," said Cambas. "I do believe that through our teachers and the partnership with Promethean, we have the ultimate power and ability to make a real difference in the classroom with our students."



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