

TANDBERG CUSTOMER PROFILE

**Georgetown
School District,
South Carolina**



GEORGETOWN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT USES TANDBERG FOR:

- Honors classes for high school students district-wide
- Virtual tours and field trips to educational destinations
- Regular training classes for teachers at distant locations
- Guidance counselor conferences at the elementary school level
- Crisis communications and emergency preparedness

GEORGETOWN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT TEACHES HONORS CLASSES, TRAINS STAFF AND CONDUCTS VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS WITH TANDBERG VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS.

Committed to educational excellence, Georgetown County School District turned to TANDBERG for a visual distance learning solution to expand access to its advanced-level classes. The solution goes beyond the classroom to help redefine where distance learning can take a student... and an entire school district.

THE CHALLENGE

The Georgetown County School District is in a class by itself. The district was ranked highest of 20 other school districts of a similar size in South Carolina by the State's Department of Education state report card. In 2005, the district's senior class earned \$5.4 million in college scholarship money; each of the district's four high schools won at least one individual or team state championship; and 12% of the district's teachers were National Board Certified — 10% more than the national average.

These impressive achievements are made even more so by the sheer size of the district. "Our district covers 840 square miles, including 4 high schools," says Dr. Randy Dozier, superintendent of schools in the Georgetown County school district in South Carolina. "With that much ground to cover, some schools are naturally farther away, and harder to reach when it comes to sharing resources, including our specialized teachers."

To deal with both the size of the area and the difficulty in finding enough accredited honors teachers, Dr. Dozier spearheaded the use of video conferencing for distance learning. "We place a great deal of emphasis on technology in this district," Dozier notes. "Videoconferencing technology would allow us to reach out across the district and deliver foreign languages, calculus, advanced placement and other classes to schools where hiring additional teachers or sharing existing ones is impractical."

Pam Toemmes, Administrative Technology Specialist for Georgetown County School District, agrees. "With visual communications, a single teacher can teach to two or three locations at the same time, regardless of geographic distance. In rural areas, it's often hard to find even one calculus honors teacher for the entire district, let alone four. We needed to meet the demands of our students, while reducing travel mileage and improving quality of life for our teachers. It didn't take us long to determine that videoconferencing was clearly the answer."

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“TANDBERG makes our job easier, giving the kids access to the classes they need in a way that lets them be active, involved and participatory. And that’s the best way to learn.”

**DR. RANDY DOZIER, SUPERINTENDENT,
GEORGETOWN COUNTRY SCHOOL DISTRICT,
SOUTH CAROLINA**

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THE SOLUTION

Determining the right solution for the district involved evaluating the available technology to find the perfect fit. “We looked at a wide range of systems,” says Diane Wingate, Director of Computer Technology Services, Georgetown County Schools, “and in reviewing various companies, we felt TANDBERG’s solutions would work best for us. Other companies offered a ‘one size fits all’ solution. Because TANDBERG offers a spectrum of solutions, we were able to select a configuration that meets our needs now, and prepares us well for flexibility in the future.”

Quality of experience is key for the county’s educational goals, and the TANDBERG systems are completely interactive — an attractive feature. “The students can see the teacher’s notes on the board at the same time they see the teacher and the other students” Toemmes notes, “so it’s almost like they’re really there. And because kids today are so into technology, they greatly enjoy the tools and the distant learning concept as a whole.”

THE RESULTS

Even before completing the entire solution implementation, the district began to see results. “With our TANDBERG solution, we were able to provide advanced placement courses to a larger number of students almost immediately,” notes Dozier. “We used it first with the more difficult college-bound courses, like pre-calculus, advanced placement (AP) calculus, AP English and French 3. Now we’re expanding the program to include virtual tours to France or the Smithsonian. Recently, we saw the space shuttle launch live.”



“For the elementary schools,” Toemmes adds, “we use the TANDBERG systems for teacher collaborations such as guidance counselors’ meetings, as well as virtual field trips.”

Using TANDBERG visual communications is also saving the district money. “With one person teaching four AP calculus classes, the savings quickly add up,” says Dozier. “An average teacher’s salary in this district is \$60,000 a year, and having one AP calculus teacher instead of four — it’s easy to do the math.”

Over the summer months, the TANDBERG systems are also used for professional staff development. “Classes are taught from the Roper Mountain Science Center in Greenville, about 250 miles away,” says Toemmes. “With our TANDBERG solution, teachers could get this additional training at little or no cost to them.”

The school superintendent believes that the future for this solution is unlimited — and not just for Georgetown County Schools. “TANDBERG is working on implementations for the local fire department, and the judicial system as well,” Dozier notes. “Soon, our schools and other public agencies will be able to connect visually and work in collaboration — for example, on emergency preparedness response.”

In fact, disaster preparedness exercises have already begun, to great success. “Recently we communicated face-to-face with the state folks on a video call from our Emergency Operations Center,” Toemmes reveals, “located in the city police station. We could track operations and weather conditions live, and talk to people at the state level in Columbia or directly with the national weather service. That level of communication can be critical during a crisis. TANDBERG’s solution made it easy.”

Teachers, administrators, local political representatives and more who have been involved with the distance learning project have been impressed with its success. “Our focus is education,” says Dozier. “We’re not in the entertainment business. But TANDBERG makes our job easier, giving the teachers some exciting tools and giving the kids access to the classes they need in a way that lets them be active, involved and participatory. TANDBERG in our classrooms has generated enthusiasm. And that’s the best way to learn.”