

# Cypress Fairbanks Creates One-of-a-Kind Learning Experience Using Audio Systems

## One district takes a closer look at the impact of instructional audio solutions for students and teachers

Finding a solution to decrease student referrals for behavioral issues can be a challenge for any school or district. Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District (CFISD) in Houston is not only doing this but finding a way to make teachers' lives a whole lot easier as well.

After implementing **Lightspeed Classroom Audio Systems**, school staff and administration discovered that students were able to hear and understand their teacher better, which improved their overall behavior.

**“One teacher kept saying that she had to use her teacher voice, and the students would match her and the volume level would go up. She then started to use the two-way audio system and said the difference in the classroom was remarkable.”**

*Becky Cook,  
director of institutional technology*

Following a **bond package passed in 2014**, CFISD will have Lightspeed systems in all 91 of their campuses by the end of 2018. The new technology has been a proven success for both teachers and students in an open classroom setting.

### THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION

The district began looking for a classroom audio system when teachers realized they needed a tool to help them with classroom management and to embrace small group instruction. “We started looking at sound quality, and other schools with systems gravitated toward Lightspeed,” said Becky Cook, the director of institutional technology at CFISD. “The two-way classroom audio system had the ease-of-use of a remote and earbuds, and

offered control and insight of group learning from a distance.”

The district conducted a pilot of Lightspeed equipment, during which Cook said teachers reported they were less tired and that their jobs had been made easier.



**SCHOOL**  
CYPRESS FAIRBANKS ISD

**LOCATION**  
HOUSTON, TX

**INDUSTRY**  
EDUCATION

### THE CHALLENGE

Teachers and students have both struggled to effectively listen and speak to each other in open classroom settings. The school has been on the hunt to solve this, along with a tool to support classroom-management and small-group interaction.

### LIGHTSPEED SOLUTION

Activate System with Topcat and Small Group Pods



### BENEFITS

Teachers can monitor group conversations without changing group dynamic.

Increased opportunities for direct instruction by providing support any time to each group through real-time insights.

Effectively instruct the whole class through wide dispersion speakers so students can hear every word, reducing redirection and off-task time.

As CFISD continues to roll out the two-way audio system, it is helping to keep teachers' energy levels high and giving them critical insights into small group learning without hovering and changing the group dynamic.

"I can hear their conversations and drop in, and they can ask questions," said Megan Puckett, a teacher at the district's Bridgeland high school. "It stretches out your reach and allows some of the kids who might be afraid to speak up in a larger context."

Teachers wear a wireless microphone around their neck and their voice evenly distributed throughout the room thanks to the Topcat ceiling speaker. The low volume, highly intelligible audio system ensures all students can hear every word when the teacher is instructing the whole class. During small group activities, teachers are able to monitor and interact with student groups thanks to the 2-way audio pods that sit with each group. Using the earpiece and mobile app, teachers can jump from group to group, gaining insight into the learning process, and reinforcing and redirecting as needed.

#### MANAGING SOUND IN FLEXIBLE SPACES

Cypress Fairbanks has a number of open-concept schools, which are specifically designed for students to collaborate in small groups. These classrooms are more flexible for the students, but the sound levels can be an issue due to the large and open spaces.

"I'm not usually able to hear if I'm in the back of the class," said Jack Stanko, a freshman at Bridgeland. "Being able to have the microphone helps sitting out in the flex space here . . . we can ask

questions so (the teacher) doesn't have to get up and leave the class."

The implementation of the two-way audio system has allowed students to better hear their teachers, who in turn can gain thoughtful insights during classroom discussions.

#### USING TECHNOLOGY FOR A LITTLE PEACE OF MIND

The ability to extend learning beyond the physical classroom has been beneficial for the learning experience. Students take the individual Activate pods with them to different areas of the classroom—even into the hallway—and the teacher can still listen to organic student conversations and encourage a positive discussion without being physically present.

The technology has been easy-to-use and has provided teachers with peace of mind, too: they now have one less challenge to worry about in their classrooms. Some teachers were a little hesitant to try it, but they watched others test it and were quick to jump on board.

"Teachers have said that they are using it and can see a difference with behavior, sound in the classroom, and the way they feel," said Cook. "Early adopters are really loving it. Then the reluctant users start seeing the early adopters, and then try it and love it."

In the future, the district will be implementing a blended learning model. With Lightspeed paving the road for stronger communication, the possibilities in CFISD's open classroom are wide open.

