

## K-12 Nebraska Educational Service Unit Obtains Nearly \$500K Grant to Implement LifeSize Technology

With the help of LifeSize's Grant Assistance Program, ESU 10 improves quality of education for students in rural Nebraska through HD video conferencing

### Organization

#### Educational Service Unit 10, Kearney, Nebraska, USA

Educational Service Unit 10, also known as ESU 10, was created in 1965 by the Nebraska state legislature. The main purpose of the organization is to provide supplemental services to school districts in the fields of special education, administration and technology. Though it provides a breadth of programs, ESU 10 has a simple vision: to offer students valuable educational opportunities regardless of population, economic status or geographic limitations.

Comprised of over 100 staff members, ESU 10 serves almost 30,000 students in 34 K-12 districts, one residential school and 10 parochial schools throughout the state of Nebraska.



LifeSize HD endpoints were deployed throughout ESU 10 member schools to enhance the quality of education for its students.



#### CHALLENGE

Budget cuts and rural geographic locations made it difficult for ESU 10 and ESU 11 students to receive access to certain educational resources in a cost-efficient manner.



#### SOLUTION

ESU 10 deployed HD video solutions in member schools including LifeSize® Express 220™, LifeSize® Team 220™, LifeSize® Passport™ and LifeSize® Video Center.



#### RESULTS

Schools saved money through a grant program and students now receive a richer educational experience through LifeSize including virtual field trips and interaction with students from all over the world.



## Challenge

ESU 10 is charged with providing leadership and support for distance education to all of its member schools in both ESU 10 and ESU 11 in central Nebraska. With the schools spread across 15 counties, many of ESU 10 and ESU 11's educational institutions are located in rural areas with little to no access to the vast educational resources offered in other regions. Additionally, as the U.S. continued to struggle with the economic recession, ESU 10 and ESU 11 school districts received less state aide to close a multimillion dollar state budget gap, forcing member schools to stretch every last dollar they received.

On top of financial issues, administrators and educators were also looking for ways to cut travel for staff development meetings, parent-teacher conferences and other trips to connect with rural students. Not only was all of this commuting time-consuming, it was expensive as fuel costs continued to rise.

ESU 10 was determined to maintain a high quality of education for its 30,000 students, regardless of the budget cuts and geographic restraints. The service unit refused to let any student's education suffer as a result of these obstacles. The leaders of ESU 10 knew there had to be a solution.

### ESU 10's Key Requirements:

**Ease of use:** Technology that is simple and intuitive, allowing for students and teachers to utilize on a daily basis

**Superior HD quality:** Full 1080p30 high-definition quality that makes video collaboration seem lifelike

**Price performance:** Using USDA grant funds, ESU needed the highest quality video technology at an unrivaled cost



**"My hope is that all K-12 students have the opportunity to access the world outside of their four classroom walls. LifeSize is the perfect way to accomplish that goal for our kids."**

**- JOHN STRITT, DISTANCE EDUCATION DIRECTOR, ESU 10**



## Solution

ESU 10's staff members quickly sprung into action to find creative ways to financially support its member schools. Having previously pursued educational grants, they began researching new opportunities for which they qualified. It was not long before the service unit realized that they were prime candidates for an upcoming round of the Distance Learning Telemedicine Program (DLT) from the USDA, a grant they had received three years prior.

John Stritt, distance education director for ESU 10 reached out to the LifeSize Grant Assistance program to write the initial proposal. This service from LifeSize aids educational institutions that are in need of government assistance and provides support throughout the entire grant writing process.

"When it came time to write this new grant proposal, the LifeSize Grant Assistance program was the first phone call I made," said Stritt. "Having implemented LifeSize technology in 2008 with the first DLT grant, I knew how fantastic the products were. The prospect of a new grant and new LifeSize equipment was definitely exciting."

With the help of the LifeSize Grant Assistance program, ESU 10 received the largest grant in its history of nearly half a million dollars. Now, the 40 member schools could upgrade and add to their portable cart systems brand new high-definition technology including LifeSize Express 220, LifeSize Team 220 and LifeSize Passport. Because of the USDA's matching program, the entire implementation amounted to over \$800,000. Suddenly, ESU 10 and ESU 11 member schools were able to use modern technology far beyond what they could have ever imagined. The possibilities seemed endless.



## Results

Students and teachers at ESU 10 and ESU 11 member schools have traveled near and far with the help of LifeSize. Using their HD video systems, K-12 classes have taken virtual field trips to Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, Homestead National Park and even NASA. In science lessons, students have interacted with classes in Texas and California to discuss the climate of their specific geographical regions. Finally, family and consumer science students have had the opportunity to participate in collaboration events with classes in Korea, Taiwan, Russia and Iran to learn about international culture.

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By utilizing the Distance Learning Telemedicine program grant funding, administrators enjoy the benefits of LifeSize without having to endure the cost. Additionally, teachers can now conduct special education conferences with parents over LifeSize and staff development meetings can be attended via telecommuting or viewed at a later date with LifeSize Video Center.

"The administrators and teachers love LifeSize technology because it allows for a richer educational experience. The kids love it too. Some of our students have been known to help their teachers on the technical aspects of the system – it is just that intuitive and easy to use," said Stritt.



Teachers and students have found the LifeSize systems incredibly intuitive and easy to use. Now, member schools utilize LifeSize for a variety of educational purposes.



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