



## CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

# Alaska's Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Creates "Classrooms Without Walls" Using Polycom® RealPresence® Video Solutions to Connect Students around the World

### Industry

- Education

### Daily Use

- Distance learning
- Collaborative teaching
- Virtual field trips

### Solution

- Polycom® RealPresence® Video Solutions help Kenai Peninsula high school teachers and students collaborate with other schools in the state and around the world
- Students in different locations participate in the same lessons, projects and discussions with high-definition audio, video, and content-sharing that's just like being there

### Results and Benefits

- Instructors can take turns leading classes, which allows each to teach to his strengths
- Students learn to collaborate using cutting-edge business tools such as including Polycom® RealPresence® Video Solutions
- With Polycom® RealPresence® Desktop and Mobile solutions, teachers can teach from anywhere
- Virtual field trips allow students to experience other cultures without incurring travel costs



### Overview

Teachers at separate high schools in the vast Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) are gaining acclaim for using Polycom® RealPresence® Video Solutions to power a grassroots program that helps enable students to understand history and cultures from different perspectives, learn collaboratively with classmates from rival schools, and engage face to face with youths and teachers from as far away as the Czech Republic.

The Classroom WithOut Walls (CWOW) project collapses the distance between KPBSD schools and the children who attend them. Using video conferencing, texting and other tools, CWOW delivers an experience so engaging that some students ask to participate in class while they're on vacation. As an added benefit, students will graduate knowing how to use Polycom® RealPresence® video and other tools to collaborate with anyone anywhere.

### Collaborating Across a District Bigger Than West Virginia

At more than 25,000 square miles, KPBSD is larger than West Virginia. Driving from one end of the district to another can take three hours. And some schools, separated from others by wilderness or seawater, are accessible only by boat or plane. All that distance makes working together among schools difficult, but vital.

The teachers who started CWOW – Greg Zorbas at Kenai Central High, Gregory Weissenberg at Soldotna High, and Rob Sparks at Skyview High – knew the benefits of collaborating. “We all taught together in the same building about 10 or 12 years ago,” says Zorbas, “and we’d collaborate together all the time. But over the years, we ended up at different schools. “I thought we could use these Polycom systems to collaborate just like we once did in person,” he recalls.



“We use Polycom as a verb here. My sophomores will be ahead of the game when it comes to college or doing a job interview via video conference. They’ll be prepared because they’re growing familiar with the best in the business.”

Greg Zorbas, World History Teacher and Co-Founder of CWOW, Kenai Central High School

Today, the teachers conduct roughly a third of all their classes over video, taking turns leading lessons with students at multiple Alaska schools as well as other schools around the world and even students at home or on the go. All the students participate in the same exercises, projects and discussions, and can share content using Polycom’s smart technology white boards. CWOW has proven so successful that the project won a \$30,000 technology grant in 2011 from Artifacts for Alaskans by Alaskans, a state competition hosted by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

### A Long List of Benefits

Polycom-powered CWOW classes meet or exceed established standards in world history, U.S. history, Russian language, Alaska studies, government and English literature. But the program offers benefits that extend well beyond learning core curriculum, including:

- Collaboration skills. Students work together in small teams using Google Docs and other shared apps to create and present projects through Polycom RealPresence video. Workgroups are spread across schools, and students use Polycom RealPresence Desktop software installed on classroom laptops to work face to face with fellow group members. “Polycom is a collaboration tool that teaches kids how to work together,” says Zorbas.
- Familiarity with video. “My sophomores will be ahead of the game when it comes to college or doing a job interview by videoconference,” says Zorbas. “They’ll be prepared because they’re growing absolutely familiar with the best in the business. We use Polycom as a verb here.”
- Access to unique events. Video is an efficient way for students in schools throughout the district to be in the same place at the same time. In April, KPBSD’s Polycom network connected 350 students for a special presentation featuring the survivor of a Soviet Gulag forced labor camp.
- Exposure to new cultures. “It takes a year to arrange a field trip overseas,” says Zorbas. “With Polycom, it takes a day.” Students recently took a workshop with a teacher in the Czech Republic. Other classes have taken virtual field trips to schools in Israel and beyond – all arranged through the Polycom Videoconference Program Database and CAPspace, a global directory and professional network of more than 11,000 educators from 41 countries who engage in video collaboration projects.
- Dissolving rivalries. An unexpected benefit of the program is that students are managing to set aside their high school rivalries.
- Anytime, anywhere teaching. Using Polycom® Telepresence m100 software on his laptop, one teacher added a couple extra days onto his Spring Break vacation and still taught a class on Peter the Great from his sister’s house in Oregon. He connected to his first-period class and presented live while recording the session for the substitute teacher to use for the next five classes. In addition, the teacher’s son attended classes by Polycom® RealPresence® Mobile while on vacation.

### Product Listing

#### Video Collaboration Environments

18 Polycom® RealPresence® Room (HDX® series)

Polycom® RealPresence® Desktop (CMA® Series)

Polycom® RealPresence® Mobile for iPads and Android tablets

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Greg Zorbas, World History Teacher and Co-Founder of CWOW, Kenai Central High School

### Lifelong Learning

“These kids are excited to come to this class. I have kids ask me if they can attend class while they’re on vacation in Hawaii. That’s what this has done.” CREDIT SPEAKER KPBSD is looking to expand CWOW to more departments and schools. And with the Polycom® RealPresence® Mobile apps, transforming mobile devices into personal video collaboration environments, this may be just the beginning. “I’ve been doing this for 20 years,” said Zorbas, “and I’ve never been more excited about my job.”

### About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in standards-based unified communications (UC) solutions for telepresence, video, and voice powered by the Polycom® RealPresence® Platform. The RealPresence Platform interoperates with the broadest range of business, mobile, and social applications and devices. More than 400,000 organizations trust Polycom solutions to collaborate and meet face-to-face from any location for more productive and effective engagement with colleagues, partners, customers, specialists, and prospects. Polycom, together with its broad partner ecosystem, provides customers with the best TCO, scalability, and security for video collaboration, whether on-premises, hosted, or cloud-delivered. Visit [www.polycom.com](http://www.polycom.com) or connect with Polycom on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

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