Why Reliable Cell Coverage Makes K-12 Schools Safer and Smarter

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While cell phones were long viewed as a distraction in the classroom or a potential vehicle for academic dishonesty, that mindset is shifting. Educators continue to realize the computing powers and educational benefits of smartphones. Not only is mobile technology changing the way school-aged children and teens communicate — and how they spend their time — it's also become an integral part of how they learn.

Thanks to mobile platform's unique capabilities — including connectivity, cameras, sensors, and GPS — these devices continue to prove their ability to enrich the academic experience. And they also extend the learning experience beyond the walls of the classroom. From the most menial school-day tasks to the most technologically complex, learning can be augmented with mobile technologies. For example, a student can improve his or her reading comprehension if they're struggling with a book by complementing it with an audio version. Or they can virtually visit a place they're studying.

The Center for Digital Education recently reported on the most productive uses of smartphones as classrooms embrace their use and establish necessary ground rules. These include:

- **Research and learning to evaluate sources**
- **Twitter feeds for assignments and to foster classroom interaction**
- **Social media as a communication and engagement tool**
- **Calendar apps to foster organization and time management**
- **Dedicated classroom discussion forums to develop skills in writing/ debating**
- **Student response systems to determine students' levels of understanding on a particular topic**
- **Photos and videos to augment class assignments and develop creative**
- **Audio recording for class lectures or to add audio elements to assignments**

Connectivity = effective learning

The International Society for Technology in Education's National Technology Education Standards evaluate what students need to know in a digital world in order to become effective learners and live productively. These standards suggest that students must work creatively and with innovation, communicate and collaborate, research with information fluency, think critically, problem-solve, and make decisions. And, students are rising to the challenge.

Today, K-12 students are more digitally literate than any generation of students that has come before them. Thanks to the advent of mobile techs and apps, they can virtually step outside of the classroom walls and utilize a broader and more engaging range of resources and tools in the learning process.

In fact, more apps are recognized as effective learning tools each year. Among them Knowji Vocab, Math Master, Summary Pro, an app for creating notes and summarizing ideas, and Explain Everything, an interactive whiteboard to name just a handful.

Connectivity also means students are able to interact with teachers and fellow students without the need to be sitting face to face. Through classroom response systems, such as Poll Everywhere, teachers can use their devices to engage classrooms full of students in real time. They can also stay in contact with students and parents, alerting them of upcoming assignments or other important information through the use of apps like Remind.

There's no question that the advancement of mobile technology has forever changed the classroom landscape for teachers and students alike, and will continue to present unprecedented opportunities in education.

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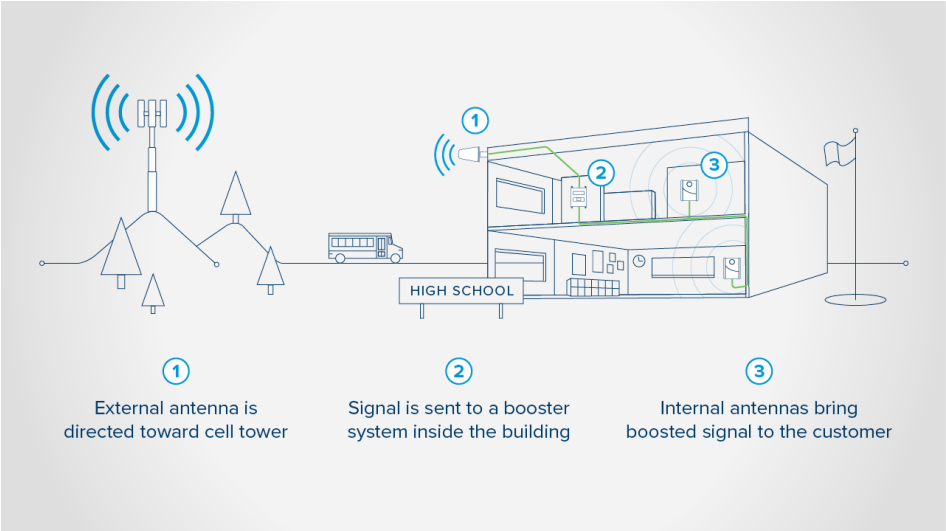
Safety and alert systems

The need for reliable and effective safety and alert systems have unfortunately also become a reality for K-12 schools. These systems, which allow internal and outgoing notifications in the event of an emergency rely on cellular signals. Alerts can be sent via text, Twitter notification, email, or dedicated apps. If a cellular signal is weak or non-existent, the safety of staff and students is at risk.

If you're a school administrator, it's important to support these technologies and maintain a reliable safety alert system by ensuring a reliable cellular signal in your building. Accessing a strong indoor signal can be difficult depending on campus size and location, building age and infrastructure. Many hundreds of students and teachers accessing a network can also overload it if it's too weak to meet those demands.

Poor signals are often left unremedied because of district budgets. The assumption is that a project to improve poor signal will be too costly. But, cell signal boosters offer affordable solutions for improving cellular reception in educational environments. These signal amplifiers, technically known as passive distributed antenna systems (passive DAS) allow schools to boost signals without the need for changing building infrastructure and the disruption that can cause. Because passive DAS signal boosters work by capturing existing outdoor cellular signal and amplifying it within the building, they boost cellular signal wherever it is weak or non-existent. There is no need to tear into walls or ceilings to install fiber-optic cable. Therefore, passive DAS cell signal boosters can be installed more quickly than traditional cell boosting solutions.



Compared with traditional cell boosting options, which can cost between $2 and $4 per square foot to install, amplifying systems can be installed for approximately 70 cents per square foot. These solutions offer a convenient way for schools to improve reception over multiple classrooms or buildings to create efficient communication, faster data transfers, and easier interaction between students, teachers and all of the digital tools they need to access.

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