



CASE STUDY:

Bedford County Public Schools



Choosing Value Over Cost

How Bedford County Public School District Found the Right ISP Partner

It's been said that accountability is the glue that ties commitment to the result. That's a sentiment that Barry Sexton can easily relate to. As Supervisor of IT Operations for Bedford County Public Schools in north central Virginia, Sexton is responsible for IT and network operations across 19 schools, a science and technology center and the school system's district office. With the demand for educational technology, post-COVID, he's got a lot on his plate these days. Accountability from his staff and partners enables Sexton to keep things moving. But that wasn't always the case.

School District's Network Was Stuck in First Gear

Around 2007, Bedford County Public Schools was struggling to provide enough reliable bandwidth to keep administrators and staff connected, let alone support technology in the classroom. Part of the problem was the network itself.

"The network we were on used older T1 connections. So, our data throughput was very limited," Sexton recalled. *"That wasn't enough to support our WAN and internet traffic and certainly not enough to enable every student to have their own laptop,"* he explained.

So, in 2008, the school district signed an 84-month contract with an out-of-state provider who was able to connect some of the school district facilities with newer microwave signaling that



"Accountability is the glue that ties commitment to the result."

-Bob Proctor, author

About Glo Fiber Business

Our parent company, Shentel, has been in this business for roughly 120 years. Our advanced fiber network is built to ensure you keep pace with the ever-changing demands of our connected world.

provided 100 Mbps to the sites. The rest of the schools and offices were supported by fiber leased from the local cable network as well as fiber owned by the city of Bedford. Despite the provider's best efforts, having multiple third-party vendors created confusion and a lack of accountability that made the situation unmanageable for Sexton and his team.

"We never really felt as though we were a priority. The account representatives were often slow to respond to questions or resolve connectivity issues. Overall, things were more difficult than they needed to be," Sexton said.

When the contract expired in 2015, the Bedford County School District put it out for bid, as per the requirements of the Federal E-Rate program. The IT team was determined to find a partner with the bandwidth, local presence, and commitment to help him create a future-ready network. The district school board awarded the business to Glo Fiber Business.

Glo Fiber Business is a longtime and well-respected network provider across Virginia and the surrounding mid-Atlantic states. Sexton and other folks on the IT team were well acquainted with the company and, in fact, was already using part of its all-fiber network at several school locations. Sexton also knew the Glo Fiber Business Development Manager for Fiber Sales who had earlier worked with the district's IT team at a previous company.

Under Glo Fiber Business, service improved and response times dropped. The company's all-fiber network was growing throughout the region, enabling the district to transition more schools and offices onto the Glo Fiber Business network. Things were moving forward.

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By 2023, it was time for the school board to rebid their WAN and internet services contract, which attracted multiple low bids. One such bid was from a low-cost provider who proposed



using leased fiber to save money. The district school board was inclined to accept the low bid, but Sexton urged the district's executive staff and school board members to look beyond cost and focus on value.

"The other company's bid came in cheaper, but they were using all third-party fiber to connect to our schools. They didn't offer a firewall-as-a-service or uninterruptible power supply units, and their technical support didn't have the same local presence at Glo Fiber Business. It would have been a big step backward for us," Sexton said.

Having worked with Glo Fiber Business for seven years, Sexton and his team were already acquainted with the value-added capabilities and services the company offered. Glo Fiber Business had its own all-fiber network that could deliver 10 Gbps pipes to each location with room to grow. At the time, the Glo Fiber Business network was covering over half the district's locations; build-out of the network was ongoing and could be expected to cover more locations as time went on.

Glo Fiber Business also offered firewall-as-a-service as part of their internet package. This included deploying and maintaining the firewall, and purchasing and maintaining the uninterruptible power supplies needed to keep the headend equipment running at each school.

What put the service provider's bid over the top, however, was that all account support

personnel, including those at the company's network operations center (NOC), are fairly local. *"Being able to call and talk to a person who knows me by name was huge,"* Sexton explained. Once Sexton was able to demonstrate Glo Fiber Business's overall value, the board quickly voted to accept the company's bid.

The Decision Pays Off

Today, Glo Fiber Business provides Bedford County Public Schools and offices with broadband, internet, and voice over IP (VoIP) services, all running on an interconnected WAN across the entire district. About 75% of the locations are now using Glo Fiber Business's network; the district office serves as the network hub with 10 Gbps links running to 16 schools and counting. The remaining schools are planning to transition away from the third-party fiber network and onto the Glo Fiber Business network as soon as the fiber is deployed.

As for Sexton's one-to-one goal of putting a laptop in every student's hands—mission accomplished. The all-fiber network infrastructure has enabled the school district to put a wireless access point in every classroom in every school.

"Over the last several years, we've seen a drastic move as administrative and classroom services migrate to the network. Intercom, alarm and security systems, VoIP, interactive panels—they all tie back into the network. So, it's imperative that school systems like Bedford County have fast, reliable connectivity," said the Business Development Manager for Glo Fiber Business.

For Sexton, the fact that the Glo Fiber Business support team sees themselves as extensions of the school district's IT staff is perhaps the biggest benefit. In the beginning, Glo Fiber Business technicians worked closely with Sexton's network administrator to strategically integrate the VoIP phone systems with new networked-based intercoms. With everything

running over the same network, administrators and staff can use their VoIP phones to page individuals, place outside calls, and broadcast school announcements over the intercom.

***When we've had issues, their techs come on site. When we call the NOC, we're on a first-name basis with a lot of those folks. It's not like a huge corporation where you must go through multiple levels of support to reach someone who actually knows what you're talking about. With Glo Fiber Business, we call and they respond,"* said Sexton.**

The relationship goes even further. When Sexton needs additional bandwidth to run system testing, Glo Fiber Business obliges. *"They give us the extra bandwidth we need to test and often don't even adjust the contract. So just having that relationship in our back pocket is huge,"* he explained.

For the remaining schools that are still using third-party fiber networks, the Glo Fiber Business account team holds themselves accountable for getting Sexton what he needs. *"When I contact them, they're on it. Sometimes they have had to light a fire under the third-party network owner to resolve the issue, but they do everything in their power to take care of us,"* he said.

That's accountability, the glue that ties commitment to the result.