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**GRANTS, TECHNOLOGY, AND TRAINING:
NEW LONDON SCHOOLS & SOLUTIONZ
PARTNER FOR GIANT LEAPS IN
EDUCATION**

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SOLUTIONZ INC.

Solutionz Inc. has been providing state-of-the-art audio visual and communication solutions to small and large businesses, government entities, major corporations, educational and healthcare institutions for more than 20 years.

Established as a forward-thinking company dedicated to staying on top of the latest technology advancements, our company credits its innovation and growth mindset for its ability to deliver high-quality systems design and support services nationwide. Whether clients need video conferencing capabilities, integration presentation networks, or interactive collaboration tools to connect remote team members in an instant, Solutionz provides reliable and effective communication and collaboration solutions and strives to be the ideal audiovisual partner.

THE CLIENT: NEW LONDON LOCAL SCHOOLS

New London Local Schools is a rural school district located 30 miles southwest of Cleveland, Ohio, serving approximately 825 students.

As the superintendent, Brad Romano has led New London Local Schools' digital transformation with a progressive vision. His ten-year plan to add technology to two or three classrooms per year was dramatically accelerated in 2020 with a federal grant award of \$1,000,000.

Fostered through a strategic partnership with Solutionz, Inc., New London Schools was awarded The Distance Learning and Telemedicine (RUS-DLT) grant administered by the US Department of Agriculture. Solutionz guided Brad and his team through the grant process, the selection and installation of game-changing technologies, digital content training for teachers, the setup of a telemedicine program and a customized maintenance plan for their AV and UC systems.



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GRANT PROGRAM SERVICES (GPS)

The story of an accelerated digital transformation for New London Schools starts with a conversation. Brad Romano, superintendent, explains, “The district is part of the Harvard Rural Education Collaborative; it's a two-year study that partnered with New York and Ohio. At one of our work sessions, a member of the Management Council: Ohio Education Computer Network, was at our table talking to us about this grant opportunity.” The Management Council member connected Brad with Solutionz because he knew about Solutionz’s Grant Programs Services (GPS) and the rest is educational technology history.

Once Brad began working with his Solutionz Account Executive, he was introduced to the GPS team. The Solutionz’s grant experts walked Brad and his team through the application process for The Distance Learning and Telemedicine (RUS-DLT) grant, guiding steps to take and making recommendations for various grant writers to partner with for the grant writing process. Brad shares, “Solutionz expertise in the technology field and experience with the grant allowed us to build out even further than what we had anticipated... (we are) using technology to bring the world to New London and without Solutionz’s support and the RUS DLT grant, we wouldn’t be able to do that.”

Solutionz is uniquely positioned to offer the critical expertise and services built into the RUS DLT grant: Distance Learning requires specialized videoconferencing engineering and equipment, telemedicine requires specialized equipment and software, Adoption and Digital Training Services ensures teachers understand how to maximize the benefits of the available technology, and Prime Call Integrated Maintenance plans provide technical support 24/7/365. Having one integrator who supports everything from grant funding to preventative maintenance saves an enormous amount of coordination time and resources.

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TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES

Twenty-four elementary classrooms were upgraded with 75" ViewSonic IFP7550 interactive flat panel displays. With integrated myViewBoard® annotation software and ViewBoard Cast streaming software, teachers can create and share content from any device. The ENERGY STAR certified display delivers optional slot-in PC capability for more computing-intensive interactive applications.

Poly G7500 videoconferencing systems were chosen for their superior audio and video capabilities, making connectivity to other sites a breeze for distance learning applications. The Poly Eagle Eye premium HD cameras capture incredible detail in a wide field of view so students in the room know that they are an essential part of the bigger picture. Three ceiling-mounted Poly microphones offers consistent, reliable, 360-degree coverage and StereoSurround™ audio. And the Poly TC 8 touchscreen control panel allows teachers to change videoconferencing settings with ease.

In addition to the classroom installations, ten remote cart systems are outfitted with ViewSonic IFP interactive displays and Poly Studio X50 systems, all-in-one audio and video conferencing soundbars with external TC8 control panels located on a shelf below the display. The high quality of the Poly audio visual components ensures that students can see and hear the content regardless of whether they are in the room with the teacher or in a remote location.



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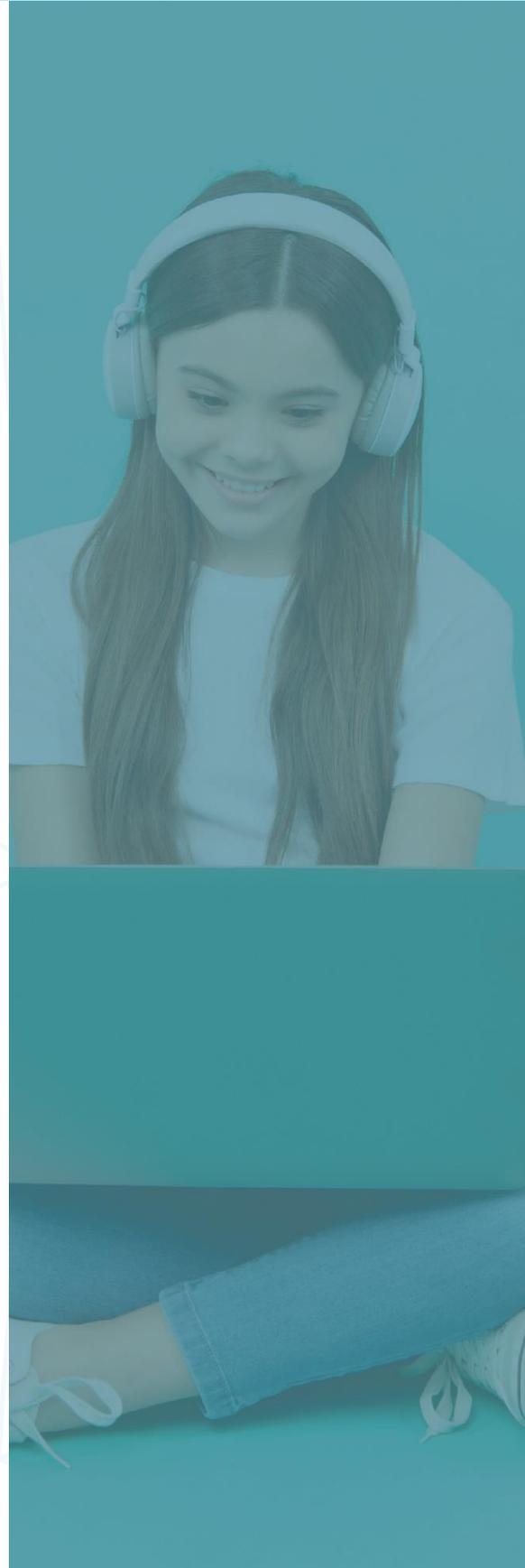
PARTNERSHIPS

Part of the requirements for the RUS DLT grant award are strategic partnerships in coordination with distance learning and telemedicine. New London Schools already had established relationships with Lorain County Community College and Norwalk Catholic Schools as partners for STEM education.

Brad explains, “With Lorain County Community College, we had an existing relationship through our College Credit Plus program, and so we’ve really built out our offerings with them. The distance learning technology can only strengthen the course offerings and the support to students.”

Distance learning technologies has the potential to allow students at Saint Paul’s, a small Parochial school, to select AP calculus classes at New London Schools, where multiple units of AP calculus are offered, or attend higher level physics classes, accessing educational opportunities not easily offered in smaller schools.

The third partner is Northwestern Local Schools (NWLS) in Wayne County, one of the few districts in the state that have a STEM designation for their preschool, elementary school, and their high school. Brad tells, “They are all STEM designated, and that’s a goal of ours, to receive STEM designation. This is an opportunity for us to learn from them and for our students and their students to collaborate. We are part of an established network of rural schools in our region that work together virtually. We are in year four of partnering with NWLS and a few other districts in our region as part of the Rural STEM collaborative with High Schools That Work and the Army Educational Outreach Program.” Leveraging partnerships with other educational institutions, distance learning technologies exponentially grow dynamic educational opportunities for students throughout the region, broadening the grant’s impact far beyond New London Schools.



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ADOPTION AND DIGITAL TRAINING SERVICES

As part of the RUS DLT three-year implementation and support plan, Solution's Prime Call Adoption and Digital Training Services (ADTS) customized training programs for teachers to learn the new technologies and how to create and deliver lesson plans. Brad shares, "We started last spring working with the Solutionz ADTS team developing some on-demand lessons for our teachers to become familiar with the technology. The fact that the ViewSonic platform is a web-based platform was really appealing to me as a district leader because I knew, especially in the midst of a pandemic, giving teachers the flexibility to work anywhere, at any time, and with any machine is very advantageous."

Even before the interactive technology is installed in every classroom, training is focused on how to implement lesson plans and create content. Teachers are grouped in grade level bands to meet the different needs, for example, a kindergarten and first grade band and a third and fourth grade band. A great deal of excitement was generated once teachers were shown different ways to implement the interactive capabilities to engage students.

Brad tells, "It was almost instantaneous. With the teachers and their creativity, the wheels were spinning about how the technology can be used in the classroom. The trainer's knowledge base is incredible as well as her ability to connect with our teachers." In addition to ongoing training sessions, ADTS will onboard new teachers, address individual questions, and devise solutions for unique challenges. For example, as the need for more remote capabilities arose, ADTS pivoted the training plan to accelerate teaching advanced content builds in the ViewSonic platform and the use of Poly videoconferencing systems. Brad explains how the new technologies have offered flexibility to accommodate remote work needs, "Using Zoom, the Poly cameras and microphones, the ViewSonic boards, we can place a substitute teacher in the room for classroom management, not for direct instruction, so the teacher is still able to provide direct instructions and interactivity with their students from the comfort of their home. Dealing with the pandemic, we are able to do that across the board in different ways because of the teleconferencing equipment that we have in our classrooms." The Poly videoconferencing system allows teachers to keep students' attention with a high-quality audio and video presence.



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TELEMEDICINE

USDA enhances healthcare for students with funding for telemedicine initiatives to connect students with remote medical services. Brad explains, “We have relationships with a couple local hospitals. Our nurse is associated with UH Samaritan Medical Center, so that's really going to be the springboard to the telemedicine piece.

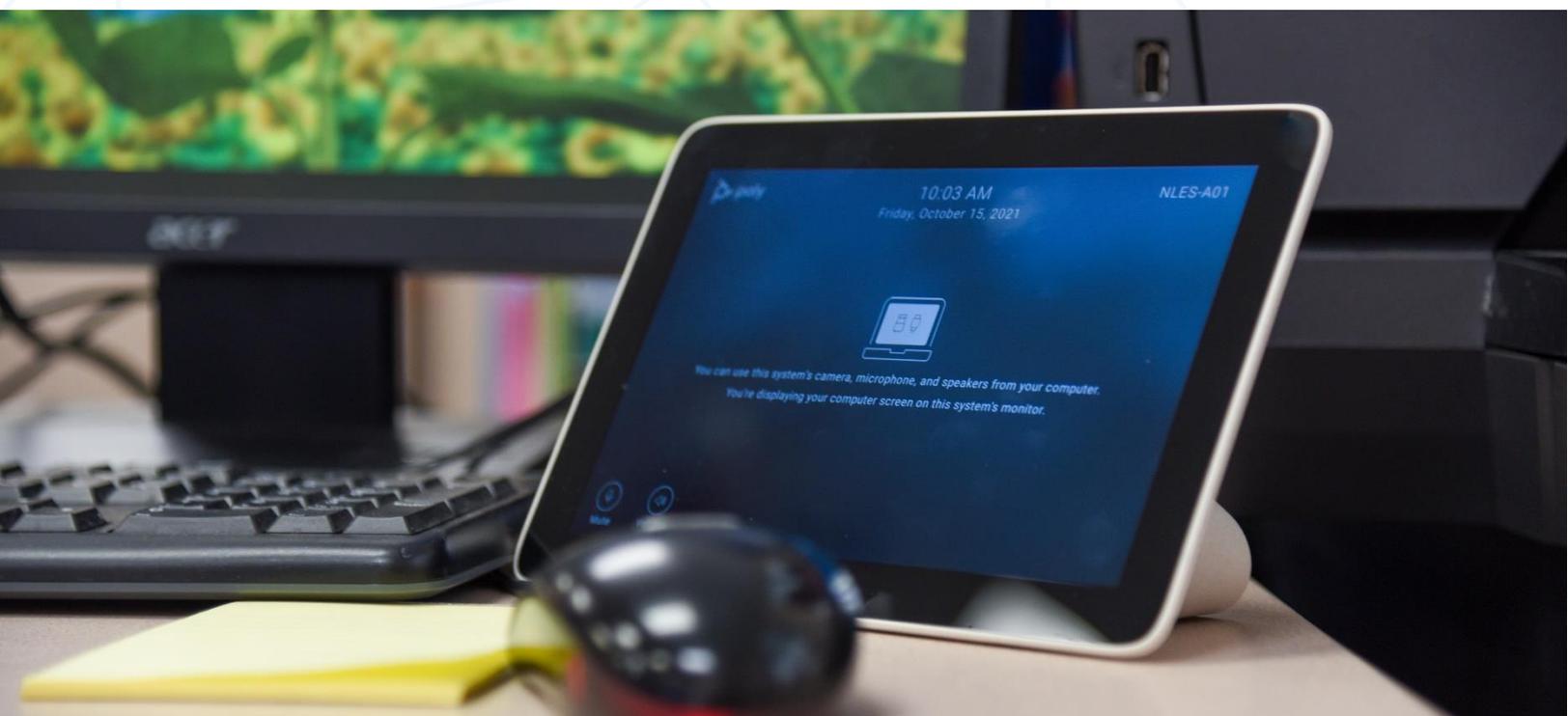
Whether it's a local urgent care here in town or the Regional Medical Center in Ashland, OH, we can connect our students with medical professionals.” Like many rural communities, New London has a poverty rate well above the state average, making access to healthcare is not only a geographic challenge but an economic one as well.



People are looking a little more progressively as to how telemedicine can fit into behavioral health and mental health.

Brad Romano, Superintendent for NLS

Brad continues, “One of our partners is the Huron County Mental Health and Addiction Services Board because they also see the value in telemedicine. If we would have said telemedicine for mental health two years ago, people would have looked at us a little funny and there was a number of state and federal statutes that made telemedicine difficult. For mental health, a lot of those barriers have been removed and people are looking a little more progressively as to how telemedicine can fit into behavioral health and mental health, so we're optimistic that we're going to have a big reach. Our plans are still in the conceptual phase, but all parties agree that the potential is there.” Access to affordable mental health and substance abuse care is a national challenge. The power of telemedicine technology is bridging the gap and saving lives in rural areas and beyond.



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PRIME CALL INTEGRATED MAINTENANCE

A three-year Prime Call Integrated Maintenance plan support all the technologies implemented under the RUS DLT funding. The Solutionz Help Desk is a call, email, or web form away 24/7/365. Providing onsite service calls for warranty repairs and replacements, preventative maintenance checks, and needed firmware updates, keeps the schools' IT resources freed up while ensuring the continued utility of vital teaching tools.



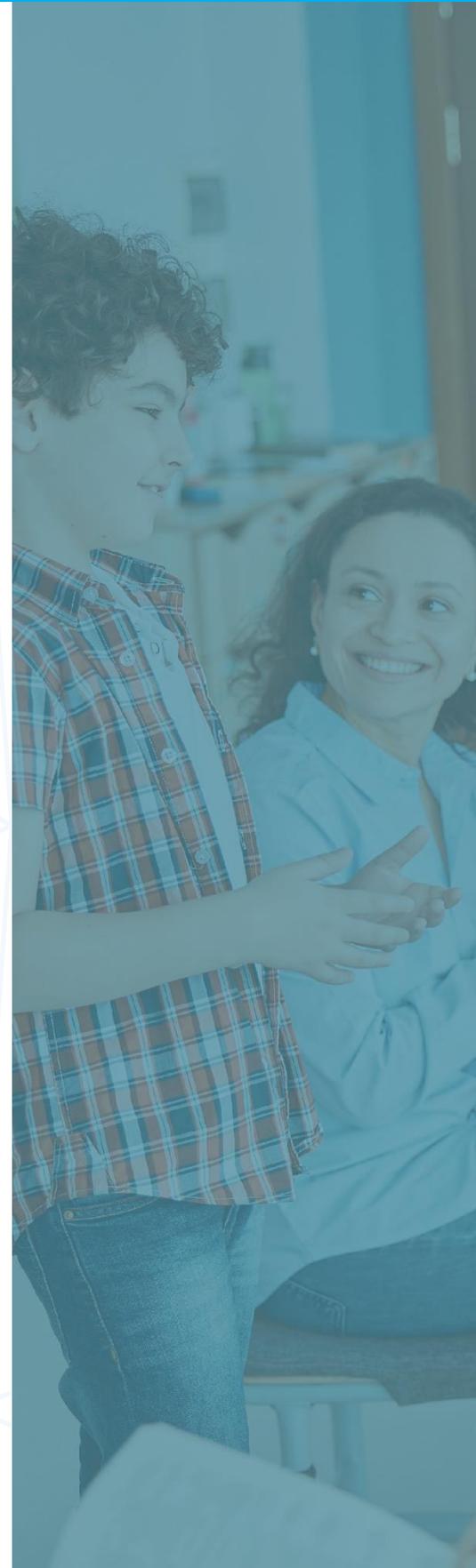
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CREATING A FUTURE WITH EDUCATIONAL OPPORUNITIES TODAY

Using the power of technology, Brad and his team have increased student engagement across a region of northern Ohio with hands-on interactive learning. Brad says, "The relationship with Solutionz overall has been very positive. I think that we've learned a lot from them in terms of the outcomes that this technology can bring to education. The level of support that Solutionz gives the district is really unparalleled considering the number of different vendors and partners that we have." Solutionz takes pride in being a trusted technology partner to school systems across the country.

Attracting and holding students' attention is a timeless challenge for teachers. Interactive technologies have gone a long way towards bringing enthusiasm into the classroom. Brad shares, "The kids just love it! They love the engagement! The ability to be interactive, having multiple students using the board simultaneously, has been a positive experience for us. It's nice because you see the excitement from our youngest learners in preschool up to the older students. The teachers are seeing the value in how easy it is to have their students engaged in lessons that may have been a little apprehensive at first." Most would agree that solid student engagement is a large ROI for technology investments.

Asked what advice Brad would have for other school leaders implementing new technologies on a large scale, Brad replied, "I would say not to limit your imagination as to what the benefits of the technology can be, and also to know that the financial cost is far outweighed by the educational benefits. What you can do with this technology is limited by your own imagination... (we) realize that this is how kids are learning and this is the world that kids are entering after they get out of public education. We owe it to them to give them these kinds of tools to make them competitive in this market."



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