CASE STUDY

THE NEED

Two of the biggest trends in K–12 education are the adoption of mobile technology and the implementation of outdoor space. Regional School District No. 7 in Winsted, Connecticut, is on the cutting edge in both. It allows middle and high school students to use their smartphones for educational and social reasons during the day. The schools also have courtyards that are used for outdoor learning opportunities and as places for students to take a break from the rigors of schoolwork. Its cell phone policy in particular is unusual compared with many school districts. Students use mobile devices in class to look up information and for web-based assignments, but they can also use their phones for personal reasons during breaks.

“We were early adopters of allowing students to use their phones,” said Dr. Judy Palmer, district superintendent. “Initially, some staff members were a bit apprehensive, but that was short-lived, and I think that speaks volumes about our culture. Our students are very respectful.”

SCHOOL PROFILE

- Regional School District No. 7 is located in Winsted, Connecticut.

- Northwestern Regional High School (enrollment 730 students in grades 9-12) and Northwestern Middle School (340 students in grades 7-8) share a building but have their own courtyards.

- High school has a 98% graduation rate and made U.S. News & World Report’s “best high school” rankings 2015.

Outdoor Charging Stations Support Technology in Schools

Outdoor Space
THE CHALLENGE

If students are going to be encouraged to use their personal devices, they need to have a way to charge them. District officials realized that adding charging infrastructure to the courtyards could meet that need and promote greater use of the outdoor spaces.

“We do have some areas to charge devices inside the building, but there was nothing outside and we wanted that option for students,” Palmer said. “If their devices aren’t charged, then they are unable to use them for classroom activities.”

THE SOLUTION

After hearing about a new product, the Outdoor Charging Station from Legrand, the school board and administrators believed they found a solution. Palmer and her Finance Director did some research and developed a plan.

“I didn’t have any concerns while implementing our plan,” Palmer said. “We had to bring electricity to the courtyards, but that was a simple process. The charging stations have a sleek design and do not take up a lot of space. They are in use daily, and we haven’t had any significant increase in our utility bills.”

Two charging stations were installed in the high school courtyard and two more in the middle school courtyard. The pedestal-shaped stations include a combination of standard power outlets and USB ports. They have a National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) 3R rating for use in all weather conditions. They also feature LED lighting, which helps illuminate the courtyards.

Palmer’s office looks out on the high school courtyard, and she sees firsthand every day how popular the Outdoor Charging Stations are with students.

“They find them very useful,” she said. “Students bring their own cords and sit on the benches next to the stations and charge their phones.”

Some educators may question the value of allowing students to use their phones during the school day and in advocating for them to take breaks outside. Palmer, an educator for more than 30 years, the last 17 as a superintendent, is not one of them.

“One of the things that I like the most is when I look out my window and I see students sitting in the Adirondack chairs relaxing, listening to music, talking with one another, charging their phones,” Palmer said. “The more I see of students in this particular environment, the more I see the value in it. I am a firm believer in encouraging students to take a break and relax with their friends when they can.”
THE LEGRAND ADVANTAGE

Palmer has seen the evolution of technology in schools during her career, from a single computer lab serving an entire school to laptop carts pushed around to classrooms. Now computers in the form of smartphones and tablets fit in a hand, are mobile and access the internet wirelessly. And nearly every student has their own.

“The internet is right at the fingertips of our students, allowing learning to take place anywhere, anytime,” Palmer said.

One of those places is outdoor spaces. Palmer sees her schools’ courtyards as a place where mobile technology and outdoor space can come together to advance students’ social and emotional development.

"It’s been great to have power out there with the Outdoor Charging Stations, the students are using them every day."

KEY BENEFITS

• Is rated for outdoor use in all weather and is durable.

• Includes standard power outlets and USB outlets, plus LED lights for illumination.

• Has a small footprint and is aesthetically appealing with black, silver, bronze or custom color options.

ABOUT LEGRAND

Legrand is a global specialist in electrical and network infrastructure solutions, delivering access to power, light and data that transforms millions of spaces where people live and work around the world.