

Donna ISD improves collaboration and parent contact using UC with RingCentral

Overview

- Donna Independent School District (ISD) manages two high schools, four middle schools and eleven elementary schools across Texas's Rio Grande Valley.
- A better voice service was needed to reduce calling complications and comply with emergency support regulations.
- Scalability was essential to meet a need for additional phone lines to improve communication within the district and with parents.

Outcomes

- A single, intuitive voice platform was established across all district schools with [Unified Communications \(UC\) with RingCentral](#).
- Features like Interactive Voice Response (IVR) improve parent engagement, while the platform ensures full compliance with 911 response regulations.
- Some 2,000 soft phones have been distributed to teachers and staff for more active communication with district parents.

Why it matters

- Not having to dial out when calling within the districts simplifies work life for teachers and staff.
- A cloud-based platform offers opportunities to add lines and service features.
- A call-center campaign utilizing UC with RingCentral reached an estimated 97% of district parents, helping end a trend of declining enrollment.

Modernized communications across 17 campuses help strengthen enrollment, boost emergency compliance

For years, administrators and parents at the Donna Independent School District (ISD) struggled with a patchwork voice system that too often left people struggling to make or answer calls. Stronger compliance with emergency call regulations was also needed.

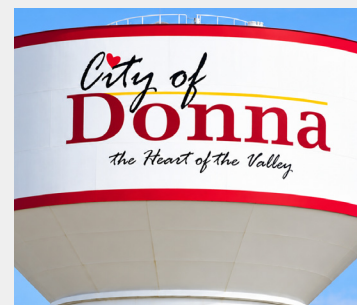
Stretching across the heart of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the district comprises two high schools, four middle schools and eleven elementary schools in southern Texas. Over 12,000 students are enrolled there.

Donna ISD Technology Director Mike Ramos worked with Spectrum Business® to install a single voice platform that simplified internal communications while improving engagement with the communities it serves.

"Our phone service is much more centralized," he says. "Our staff can talk to each other much faster now; even chat directly using Instant Messaging. And we see our entire district-wide voice system on a single pane of glass."

UC with RingCentral simplifies calling

In the past, Donna ISD teachers and administrators had to dial out when making calls, even to other buildings on the same campus. "It was a major cause of complaint," Ramos recalls.



Donna, Texas is a city a few miles north of the Rio Grande. Its school district is focused on improving student outcomes, which includes enabling stronger communication with teachers, administrators and parents.

Customer profile



Company

Donna Independent School District (ISD)

Industry

K-12

Size

12,400 students and 2,000 teachers, administrators and staff

Services

Unified Communications with RingCentral
Dedicated Fiber Internet



Unified Communications with RingCentral gives teachers, administrators and staff a fully managed, cloud-based voice solution. Its call center functionality was used successfully to contact parents for a major student enrollment drive.

Enabling teachers to communicate with parents directly, using “soft phone” apps connected to a computer or mobile device, was also desired. This would allow efficient, practical communication that eliminated the need for teachers to use their personal phone number as a point of contact.

All this and more are achieved with [Unified Communications \(UC\) with RingCentral](#), a fully managed, cloud-based voice solution that enables smoother, stronger collaboration across the district. Now teachers and administrators can reach each other simply by dialing an extension, saving time.

The soft phone capability is also a plus, Ramos adds: “When I am away from the office, I can still pick up calls from my RingCentral app. Employees and administrators say soft phones are a very good way for them to stay in touch and be able to take calls, no matter where their work takes them. That’s just one reason everyone is so happy with the app.”

So far, nearly 2,000 soft phones have been distributed across the district.

“School districts today need communications technology that helps them stay connected with staff, students and families while supporting increasingly complex operational demands,” notes Justin Niebel, Director of Vertical Market Sales, Spectrum Business. “By deploying UC with RingCentral, Donna ISD created a more collaborative environment across its campuses, strengthened parent outreach, and supported critical initiatives like enrollment engagement and emergency response.”

The voice service is connected to the internet over a [Dedicated Fiber Internet](#) circuit, which is also used by Donna ISD as emergency backup for the district’s main internet service.

“Unified Communications with RingCentral has been a big hit here in Donna because of what it can do. It can transcribe calls, it has a built-in chat feature so people can instant-message each other across the district. It can do so much.”

**Mike Ramos, Technology Director,
Donna Independent School District**

“Having that additional redundancy gives us peace of mind,” Ramos says, noting sudden weather events have been disruptive in the past.

Safety features strengthen emergency response

Student safety is top of mind for Donna ISD. UC with RingCentral is designed to comply with emergency call regulations like Kari’s Law (to prevent the need to dial out when calling 911) and RAY BAUM’s Act (requiring instant availability of dispatchable location data).

Every phone line at Donna ISD is designed to communicate precise location data instantly, so emergency personnel know where to reach a caller. And making calls from any part of the district is easier than ever.

“There are regulations we want to be sure we stay up to date with,” Ramos notes. “Student safety is always top of mind; it’s great to have a voice system that prioritizes that.”

With many campuses to look over, he adds the system is carefully tested and monitored regularly to make sure



Bus service is critical to Donna ISD, as students often travel long distances between home and school. If buses run late, UC with RingCentral helps district administrators keep parents informed.

emergency responders have all the information they need: "Most definitely it is of the utmost importance."

Improving enrollment by proactively engaging parents

In recent years, declining enrollment has become a growing problem for Donna ISD. With changing demographics, two elementary schools had closed. Others were in jeopardy of doing the same.

"We didn't want enrollment to go down any further," Ramos says. "We wanted to call the parents and enroll the students for next year to make sure they were staying here in Donna."

Ramos and his IT team set up a special on-site call center using the RingCentral platform. In the end, Donna ISD was able to reach parents and guardians for 97% of their student body.

They used these opportunities to confirm the vast majority in the district would be sending their child to Donna ISD the following school year. In some cases when parents had procedural

questions, steps for re-enrollment were explained. "It made a big difference just letting the parents know we were invested in their children's future," Ramos said.

He adds that enrollment has remained stable ever since. "It's an easy system to use, very intuitive," he says. "And it's very flexible."

Cloud calling ensures entire district stays connected

Having a cloud-based service allows the district to add as many phone lines as it needs. No longer is the district stifled by having to manage physical hardware with different points of origin or operational requirements.

"We used to have a problem with not enough lines going into our transportation department," Ramos recalls. "After-school buses run late sometimes and parents would call and get a busy signal. With this new system, we have added 15 lines to accommodate these calls now."

Other useful UC with RingCentral features include AI-enhanced Interactive Voice Response (IVR), which automatically fields calls when a teacher or staff member is unavailable. "It never just rings anymore," Ramos explains. "A parent can leave a message or be transferred to another person who can help. This helps us maintain a connection with every parent."

Simply by adding a pre-recorded MP3 file, the IVR can include a customized message so parents can be kept informed of important district events while waiting for their call to be answered.

"Interactive Voice Response gives us the ability to share all sorts of information with parents, which has been very helpful in making them feel more connected with the school district."

**Mike Ramos, Technology Director,
Donna Independent School District**



Donna Independent School District (ISD) comprises 17 schools in south Texas. Its diverse array of extracurricular and afterschool activities includes varsity football.

“Donna ISD’s success demonstrates how modern communications support K-12 organizations in achieving their goals,” explains Mark Kornegay, General Vice President for Vertical Markets Sales, Spectrum Business. “With a unified cloud-based platform, the district enhanced collaboration, improved accessibility for families, supported critical compliance needs and helped stabilize enrollment through stronger community engagement. We’re proud to help educational institutions leverage technology to create meaningful connections and better serve their communities.”

Ramos is pleased with the recent addition of the backup fiber circuit, and also impressed by the responsiveness of Spectrum Business engineers and technicians in ensuring that the voice platform meets his needs. He has been impressed by the lack of need for service calls.

“It just works,” he says. “People use it all the time and I never hear a complaint. It’s just so easy to work with.”

Solution summary

- **Unified Communications with RingCentral** — A fully managed cloud-based platform enables simplified calling as well as soft phone distribution to help teachers manage parent interactions. Features include Interactive Voice Response for managing calls when staff is not available and call center capabilities.
- **Dedicated Fiber Internet** — Provides voice service connectivity as well as reliable backup for internet service across the district.

“Setting up a call center for our enrollment drive was easy. We were able to use it effectively in many ways, like taking parents through the paperwork needed to re-register their children. Our Parent and Family Engagement Centers were able to take advantage of this very effectively.”

Mike Ramos, Technology Director, Donna Independent School District

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