



JTHS
District 204

INTERVIEWED

▶ **Matt Kellett,**
Director of Information
Technology Services

INDUSTRY

▶ Education

CHALLENGE

▶ Install a cost-effective
big-screen video
wall in high school
multipurpose cafeteria

High School Boosts Pride and Communication with Seamless 216-Inch ViewSonic Direct View LED Display

SCHOOL

Located in Will County, Illinois, the Joliet Township High School District 204 (JTHS) encompasses Joliet Central High School and Joliet West High School. Founded in 1899 it is one of the area's oldest school districts. Four regional middle school districts attend JTHS: Joliet Public Schools District 86, Rockdale School District 84, Troy School District 30-C, and Elwood School District 203.

CHALLENGE

The cross-town rivalry is classic, perpetually played out at high school sporting events and club competitions. At the Joliet Township High School District (JTHS), the rivalry between Joliet Central High School (Central) and Joliet West High School (West) goes beyond athletics and debate.

It began in 2016, with the completion of Central's expansive new Student Center, which included a large video wall made of a 4x4 grid of 55-inch displays. Used for daily announcements about clubs, sports, tutoring opportunities and more, the space was also used after hours for meetings and presentations, according to JTHS Information Technology Services Director Matt Kellett.

"It's been very useful for community meetings and professional development, as well as for student-focused content," added Wendy Davis, JTHS Network and Media Manager. "Folks at West were quickly saying, 'We want a cool video wall.'"

The true level of competitive intensity over the video wall is anyone's guess, but it's not hard to imagine students and educators at Central boasting about it

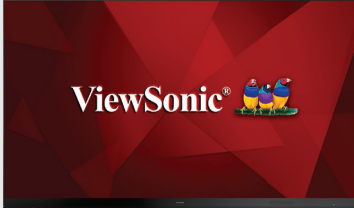
"It sounds corny but when they first saw it pretty much everyone was in awe of how it looked. It is such a superior product than what was installed at Central. Everyone from the principal to the support staff was excited to see a display that big with no seams."

— **Matt Kellett, Director of Information Technology Services**



SOLUTION

- ▶ ViewSonic 216" LD216-251 1080p Direct View LED Display
- ▶ ViewSonic® VS18189 ViewBoard Cast™ Button



to their counterparts at West. While it took a few years to amass the funds, as soon as they were able, district administrators – committed to equity between the schools – authorized implementation of a video wall at West. Kellett and Davis began researching display technology.

SOLUTION

ViewSonic was top of mind when the IT team began looking into display wall solutions. Three years prior they had outfitted libraries at both high schools with ViewSonic® ViewBoard® interactive displays, chosen from a review of several manufacturers.

“At that time the ViewSonic interactive displays were the most affordable and had the most desirable features. We ended up also putting them in spaces around the school because everyone wanted them,” said Davis. “Little did we know when we started looking for a video wall that it would be the same story this time around.”

Once again, the team looked at several options, and once again the ViewSonic product won out – and by no small margin, Kellett and Davis agreed.

“When we saw the ViewSonic presentation it was almost like we didn’t need to look at anyone else,” said Davis. “They had the best price by quite a bit and the other three we looked at were the old-style walls that put together several standard displays. The ViewSonic solution was completely seamless.”



It was like the proverbial apples to oranges. On the one hand, traditional video walls made up of large monitors with visible frames that required separate components and on-going maintenance and calibration. On the other, a system of thin and light, perfectly pre-calibrated 12x12-inch panels that install quickly and deliver a huge and completely seamless image in an all-in-one, easy to maintain solution.

The team chose the largest among several available sizes: the ViewSonic 216" LD216-251 1080p Direct View LED Display.

“Sure, ViewSonic had the lowest bid, but the Direct View Display was also the best choice for so many reasons,” said Davis. “It is truly an all-in-one turnkey solution that also was the best-looking of all the options.”

RESULTS

- ▶ The Direct View LED cost less and provided superior technology compared to the traditional video walls evaluated
- ▶ Maintenance is easier and less costly than with a traditional video wall
- ▶ The massive display is in use daily communicating essential content, and is a source of pride for the school
- ▶ After school hours the display is used for school activities and community presentations

To streamline connectivity and enhance security, the team also purchased ViewSonic ViewBoard Cast Buttons (Model VS18189), which they affectionately call the “pucks.”

RESULTS

As expected, installation went smoothly and was completed in less than a full workday.

“We were thrilled with how truly all-inclusive this display is. For setup all we had to do was hook up a network drop and connect remotely. It was seamless,” said Kellett. “And the installation process was interesting to see. First they leveled and attached the brackets, then after that adding the LED panels went very quickly.”

The following week the massive screen was unveiled to West High School staff at an institute day.

“It sounds corny but when they first saw it pretty much everyone was in awe of how it looked,” said Davis. “It is such a superior product than what was installed at Central. Everyone from the principal to the support staff was excited to see a display that big with no seams.”

According to Davis, the display is in use from the start of the school day to well past the last bell on most days.

“During the day it’s used as digital signage, like the one at Central, displaying announcements like sports schedules and extracurricular opportunities, and giving shout outs to students,” she said. “After school teachers use it during club meetings, then after that we often hold community meetings in the space.”

Beyond looking downright amazing, the ViewSonic Direct View LED display has provided enhanced security and features that save time and extend staff resources.

“One terrific feature is the ability to connect in someone who’s remote by giving them a URL link and access code,” said Kellett. “Another great feature that increases our security and saves time is the ViewSonic ViewBoard Cast Button, which plugs into the display and enables visitors to connect to the display without having to access our network.”

Kellett added that the IT team is looking forward to the reduced (and easier) maintenance of the ViewSonic Direct View LED compared to their “old school” video wall.

“With our older video wall if a screen goes bad it’s a major issue. We have to call someone in to take it out and replace it,” he said. “This involves a lot of time leveling the screen and even once it’s positioned perfectly it will never look completely right because it’s newer than the other screens and the calibration will be off.”

By contrast, the ViewSonic Direct LED system came with spare panels right off the bat, said Kellett, and each one is perfectly calibrated in the factory and never needs adjusting.

“Swapping out the LED panels is fast and easy. You need a lift, but beyond that anyone can do it, and this is going to save us time and headaches,” said Kellett.

“For example, say we have an after-hours presentation scheduled. A tech will assess the display and make sure everything is working perfectly. If they need to swap out a panel they can do it in five minutes. With the stacked display wall, you’d be out of luck – you’d have to call in a third party and cancel the presentation.”

Kellett noted that the ViewSonic Cast Button is also a significant timesaver that reduces staff tech support.

“For me the pucks are a huge benefit. With our old video wall, when we have a visitor come in there are often problems with them accessing the screen,” he said. “The puck makes everything seamless and provides peace of mind.”

The list of time-savers goes on, not the least of which is the seamlessness of the LED Display as an all-in-one solution, said Kellett and Davis.

“We didn’t add a single third-party product to this solution: not a media player or anything else was needed,” said Kellett. “This cuts down the components that could require maintenance, adds to the overall system reliability, and keeps this beautiful, thin display clean and aesthetically uncluttered.”

The video wall at Central, by contrast, requires a separate computer and separate software to run it as a digital display.

“At Central there are more components to the system,” said Kellett. “And when there are more components there are more potential points of failure.”

Once more we can imagine that the competitive pride at West continuing to grow, as according to Davis, many area schools have reached out to arrange for viewings.

“The tech director from a neighboring school district was at West for a sporting event, saw our huge display, and is considering it for his school,” said Davis, “We get so many people from the community and surrounding region admiring it.”

A major win in our imagined battle of the video walls came with the annual State of the District event, at which the superintendent hosts community members and area business.

“The event was scheduled to be at Central, and when the organizers saw the ViewSonic Direct View LED wall at West, they mentioned that it was unfortunate that we did not have the same display at both campus, noting that the bar graphs and other content would show up better on the seamless display,” said Kellett.

And so the rivalry goes on. Kellett and Davis, of course, support both schools and are neutral observers, but one thing is clear: When it comes to big screen tech, West is currently in the lead.

“It’s truly outstanding in all the ways we’ve talked about,” said Kellett. “Plus, the colors are so vibrant, they just pop. In this, too, we have found the ViewSonic Direct View LED display to be superior to a traditional video wall.”

