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Afton Central School Uses MP3 Player to Help Special Needs Students

Issue

Located in rural upstate New York, Afton Central School (ACS) serves a growing community of 1,800 village residents. More than 800 K-12 students attend ACS within a single building that has grown over the years as a result of the community's educational priorities.

Susan Bethel, one of the school's special education teachers, manages a self-contained resource room with seven students for two periods each day, and helps students with learning disabilities who are taking regular classes throughout the day. To help the special education team with their reading activities, Dan DeVona, the school's librarian and media specialist for grades 6-12, decided to research how personal media players can enhance the learning environment.

"Though we are a small school in a rural environment, we pride ourselves on trying to anticipate the technology we need, such as MP3 players," DeVona said. "We try to think about our technology purchases strategically, making sure they can be used in multiple ways across the curriculum."

Case Study: Afton Central School Afton, New York

The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders asserts that more than 30 million Americans are exposed to hazardous sound levels on a regular basis. In addition, many studies have found that irreparable hearing loss can result from exposure to high levels of noise over extended periods of time. For these reasons, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) recently tested popular consumer MP3 devices and found that they all produce sound well above the maximum recommended safety level of 85 decibels.

With this finding in mind, Califone International, Inc., designed its MP3 Player to adhere to the safety level recommended by ASHA. This appealed to DeVona as his student's safety is a top priority. He wanted to ensure the MP3 player he chose was both durable, and safe for use in the classroom and comfortable for use by the school's special education students.

Implementation

DeVona decided to purchase the Califone MP3 Player. "We acquired the MP3 players from Califone because we were intrigued by the two headphone jacks for listening with a partner, teacher, mentor, or parent, and we saw the potential use of the technology across the curriculum," DeVona said.

The company's goal in creating the MP3 Player was to provide educators with an accessible technology that enhances instruction and prepares students for the 21st century. Students are increasingly comfortable with the technology of personal MP3 players, and Califone wanted to ensure its model set the education industry standard for technical innovation and student safety.

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The MP3 player was designed to meet the ASHA-recommended decibel-level limit through the company's Sentinel™ technology. Sentinel enables restricts the maximum audio level to 85 decibels, one of the recommended guidelines set forth by the ASHA-sponsored Our America: Tuned In Today...But Tuned Out Tomorrow? campaign (listentoyourbuds.org).

In addition, the MP3 player has dual headphone jacks, allowing two students to share a single unit. This is ideal for learning centers, language labs and libraries that provide opportunities for shared activities. The company's 8100-HP headphone is standard equipment with the MP3 player, which was calibrated for use with these headphones in part because of their ambient noise-reducing feature.

Results

Bethel now uses the MP3 Player to record required reading for special education courses, allowing her students to listen to the story or activity during their free time for remediation. "The MP3 Player is easier to use than a tape recorder, and students can use it without drawing attention to themselves. It doesn't make them stand out," Bethel said.

The MP3 Player is made with rugged ABS plastic for durability and classroom safety. Each unit comes with the unique Califone warranty covering school, early childhood center and library uses – a guarantee typically not available for products purchased from consumer electronics stores. It also is available as the industry's first MP3 learning center.