

# productfocus • Kurt Eisele-Dyrli

A GUIDE TO ONE SEGMENT OF EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY

## Engage Students With Classroom Audio

WHILE TODAY'S K12 CLASSROOMS USE MORE MULTIMEDIA THAN ever before, typically it is the visual technologies—such as projectors, interactive whiteboards and television displays—that receive most of the attention in the marketplace. The audio component is just as important, however, and can often be overlooked. That is rapidly changing, and a number of companies are beginning to design classroom audio systems to meet a growing demand for better sound.

Classroom audio systems vary in cost, sophistication, features and power, so there are many configurations available on the market to meet different district needs. In addition to amplifying video and other multimedia, most are designed to enhance instruction by amplifying teacher or student voices with a wireless microphone, which can reduce vocal strain and increase student comprehension and engagement. Here are a few options to consider using in your district.

### EPSON

#### AP-60, \$799

Epson's classroom audio system has a unique design that allows it to be installed by attaching it to a standard projector ceiling mount. The unit has four speakers totaling 60 watts of power, which provide 360 degrees of sound. The AP-60 also includes a wireless infrared pendant microphone, a remote control, and two audio inputs for amplifying DVD players or other media sources. It can support two microphones simultaneously.



### CETACEA SOUND

#### Astronaut, \$245.68, \$315.66

Cetacea has designed its Astronaut line of speaker systems to offer inexpensive alternatives to more complicated options on the market. The single-speaker design of the Astronaut CL (\$245.68) includes a 40-watt speaker; a three-channel mixer for multiple sources such as projectors, DVD players, or MP3 players; and patented acoustics technology for maximum intelligibility. Cetacea also offers wireless lapel, headset and handheld microphones as options. New to the line is the Astronaut XL (\$315.66), a more powerful 60-watt system for larger rooms.

### EXTRON

#### VoiceLift, \$1,400 to \$1,550

Extron Electronics offers this package for schools looking to install more sophisticated classroom audio systems. It includes all the necessary components to get started: a wireless rechargeable microphone, an infrared receiver, a switcher/amplifier, Extron's patented Flat Field ceiling speakers, and all necessary cables. Users have the option of upgrading to the company's PoleVault system for adding a ceiling-mounted projector or to the WallMount system for adding a wall-mounted projector.



### LIGHTSPEED TECHNOLOGIES

#### TOPCAT, Contact Lightspeed for pricing

The new TOPCAT product from Lightspeed is intended to simplify the process of installing and using a classroom audio system, particularly in new construction, by combining several components into a single unit. The TOPCAT fits into a standard two-foot-square ceiling tile and includes a hybrid speaker to allow for both clear voice and multimedia audio. It also includes Lightspeed's REDMIKE VC wireless microphone and is designed to allow for wireless connection to a variety of sources, all from the teacher's desk.



*Other classroom audio systems are available from: Panasonic, Califone, Bose, CTG, RevoLabs, Sennbeiser, Crestron, SMART Technologies, FrontRow and Calypso Systems.*