

California Panorama: Bringing Nature to the Classroom with Jabra and California State Parks



THE CHALLENGE

Nowhere is California's beauty more evident than in one of its 280 state parks – from massive redwood forests and poppy fields in bloom to pristine mountain habitats full of diverse wildlife. Beyond sheer beauty, nature in its many forms offers an inimitable learning environment. Students who venture to state parks can observe and interact with the natural world around them – an experience that's hard to replicate in the classroom.

However, not every student can visit these wonders. To bring California's vast natural treasures to every pupil, California State Parks established the Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS)® program. The PORTS Program offers free live and on-demand presentations, allowing students to explore the state's outdoors – virtually.

PORTS immerses students in experiences like dynamic videos of kayak rides around Point Lobos, and interactive, field trip-style explorations of Hearst Castle. The program brings the magic of nature and history to classrooms across the state in more than 5,000 virtual learning presentations a year.

SOLUTIONS AT A GLANCE

Jabra PanaCast 50

- Unique 180° field of view in high-definition Panoramic-4K
- Range of AI-driven intelligent features
- Easy to use, plug-and-play setup

Jabra PanaCast 20

- 4K Ultra-HD video for crystal clear imagery
- Intelligent Zoom keeps speakers centered in frame
- Lightweight and portable

BlueParrott C400-XT

- Premium noise cancellation limits background distractions
- Compact design with versatile wearing styles
- Water and dust resistant

For PORTS to succeed, park staff must be able to communicate clearly with everyone listening, which can include up to 10,000 students in one hour. Students must be able to hear and engage with these experts who are streaming from unique environments like windy mountaintops and rivers with rapids. They also need to be able to see the expansive views of forests and zoom in to blacksmithing demonstrations in action. The PORTS Program needed audio and video tools that could contend with these challenges and make outdoor learning a reality.

“Our goal is to bring the state's park resources to more students, especially those who might not otherwise be able to experience them. Having high-quality audio and video is critical to bringing the historical, cultural, and natural legacy of California to life virtually,” said Brad Krey, California State Parks - Interpretation & Education Program Manager.

THE PLAYERS

The PORTS Program currently has 60 park staff working from 55 California state parks across all corners of the state. PORTS wanted to empower these experts to highlight the parks in the most seamless way possible with crisp, clean audio and crystal-clear video. They needed technology to bridge the divide between their vantage point in nature and the classroom. Because of their unique environments, they needed tools that provide high-quality audio and video for immersive experiences, long battery life to accommodate extended time in remote locations, durability to endure natural elements, and above all – tools that are flexible, easy to use and plug-and-play.



“We're constantly evolving and trying to have more and more high-production quality experiences for students. That's what they get with gaming and social media today, and that's what they're expecting from virtual learning as well. Jabra tools are helping us achieve this,”

Brad Krey, California State Parks - Interpretation & Education Program Manager

With more than 150 years of expertise in world-leading audio and unique, one-of-a-kind video solutions – Jabra brings digital collaboration to life. Jabra’s line of PanaCast video conferencing cameras provide premium video collaboration experiences, no matter where you’re setup – whether outdoors or in a classroom. Equipped with a range of AI-driven intelligent features like Intelligent Zoom for presenters on the move, and a unique 180° field of view, the Jabra PanaCast series provides a natural, engaging, and inclusive experience for all participants tuning in. Plus, the devices are plug-and-play and work seamlessly with unified communications platforms.

BlueParrott headsets are engineered for superior calls in high-noise environments, whether a high-wind mountaintop or a park adjacent to a highway. Designed for comfort and flexibility, the headsets are lightweight and discreet, and provide numerous wearing styles –even under a park ranger’s hat. And with an IP54-rating for protection against dust and moisture, they are built to last whatever the conditions.



THE SOLUTION

The PORTS Program’s goal is to bring students closer to California state parks through digital storytelling, while addressing both the needs of digital-native students who are accustomed to a high level of production quality and park staff leveraging technology in unique environments. These challenges led PORTS to Jabra, whose innovative audio and video technology creates seamless collaboration, regardless of where participants are located.

For PORTScasts featuring panoramas like sweeping forests and wide museum rooms, the Jabra PanaCast 50 intelligent video bar provided a unique 180° field of view in Panoramic-4K, allowing presenters to capture expansive views with no distortion. PanaCast 50’s intelligent features helped everyone feel like they’re in the action together, even when they’re spread in classrooms around the state. For one PORTScast, the program brought PanaCast 50 a quarter mile into the redwoods for a Women’s History Month live broadcast on the “Heroines of the Redwoods” – providing panoramic views and bringing viewers an immersive learning experience.

Jabra PanaCast 20 provided a lightweight and portable, yet powerful tool for park staff to leverage for PORTScasts. With Intelligent Zoom to automatically keep the presenter in frame, high-quality video and simple USB-C connection to get up and running from anywhere in seconds, PanaCast 20 helped to power strong PORTS visual storytelling on the go.

Utilizing BlueParrott headsets like the C400-XT in the noisiest environments, park staff were able to limit background distractions and create a more engaging audio stream for students tuning in from afar. The headset let in just the right amount of ambient noise, so PORTScasts feel realistic without being drowned out by what’s happening in the background. Long lasting battery life helped to keep experts connected, no matter how deep into a park they ventured or how many PORTScasts for students they conduct. The headsets also provided hands-free and cord-free access, flexibility to wear under hats or helmets, and the durability to weather even the toughest natural environments.

LOOKING AHEAD

Jabra and BlueParrott have helped the PORTS Program bridge the technology divide and bring to life enhanced learning experiences in unique settings. Experts in parks have facilitated engaging conversations with students without distractions from background noise and students have experienced high-quality video to bring state parks digital storytelling to life.

As more students become native to a digital world, the expectations for high production value will continue to grow. Because of this, the right tools and innovations are needed to go deeper into forests and farther into estuaries to bring students that much closer to California’s state parks.

“The right technology has been and will continue to be a key enabler for us in carrying out our mission,” Krey said. “We look forward to the future of the PORTS Program and will continue to bring California’s state parks to more students across the state – and even across the country – in new, immersive ways.”



Learn more here:

[California State Parks PORTS Program](#)

[Jabra PanaCast](#)

[BlueParrott](#)

