

Arizona District Prepares for Next-Generation Assessments Flagstaff USD teaches digital literacy skills with Learning.com

When Flagstaff Unified School District began its search in 2006, Director of Technology Mary Knight was looking for a technology curriculum that would enable educators to easily teach essential digital literacy skills. Learning.com soon emerged as Flagstaff's solution for providing students with a comprehensive 21st century education.

"We looked at a number of curricula being used in other districts, most of which were home-grown," said Knight. "EasyTech from Learning.com was the only set of complete instructional tools for addressing technology literacy. EasyTech continues to deliver the digital literacy and technology curriculum our students need for success."

EasyTech from Learning.com makes it easy to integrate 21st century skill building into classroom instruction and helps students efficiently learn technology skills, digital literacy, and higher-order thinking as they study and learn core curriculum.

"EasyTech is a program that allows my students to listen for knowledge, think critically about what they heard and act on it," said Adria Curtin, technology teacher at Cromer Elementary in Flagstaff Unified School District.

Flagstaff is a strongly multicultural district with significant numbers of language minority students. Roughly half of the district's elementary schools receive Title I funding. Flagstaff has two schools with technology teachers at the elementary level and technology teachers for elective courses at the middle and high school levels. "The staffing arrangement presents a challenge, particularly for the elementary schools. EasyTech enables teachers to incorporate



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technology skills into core curricula, offsetting the handicap of limited staff resources,” said Knight.

“EasyTech allows teachers to get started teaching digital literacy skills in a way that wouldn't otherwise be possible.” The program provides a specific framework that's easy to implement and aligned to technology standards,” added Knight.

Flagstaff has seen a steady growth in EasyTech usage over the years, with two specific implementation strategies generating best results. Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, district officials automatically set up accounts for each teacher. Knight said teachers were more likely to use EasyTech tools when they were already “up-

and-running.” Second, Flagstaff used the Custom Curriculum Publishing tool in the Learning.com platform to create a custom sequence of EasyTech that aligned to their instructional goals. The extra level of specificity makes it easier for teachers to identify grade-appropriate lessons for their classes,” said Knight.

Monitoring EasyTech use is essential for Flagstaff, as the district has to justify all of its spending. Learning.com provides real-time usage reports, which Knight and other administrators examine to determine when, and how frequently, teachers are deploying EasyTech tools in classrooms.

With EasyTech fully implemented, Flagstaff is using the Learning.com program to address three key areas of interest: digital literacy skills, Internet safety requirements from the e-Rate program, and the forthcoming Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests.

“We’ll use EasyTech to support our students in their ongoing digital literacy skills development,” said Knight in regard to the first key area. “From the earliest opportunity, we want to create a rich learning environment that meets students where they learn best.

To the second point, teaching students Internet safety isn’t just a good idea, it’s required of Flagstaff since the district receives e-Rate funding. The e-Rate program supports K–12 students and library patrons in the United States. The program provides discounts up to 90 percent

on goods and services essential for classrooms and libraries to receive voice, video and data communications. To satisfy e-Rate rules, Flagstaff must provide Internet safety education for students, a requirement the district meets by assigning one EasyTech lesson to each K–8 grade. By the time students enter high school, they’ll have completed a wide array of Internet safety lessons.

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Finally, Flagstaff leverages EasyTech for PARCC/Smarter Balanced to prepare for new computer-based Common Core assessments. In December 2012, Learning.com reorganized its award-winning EasyTech curriculum to align with the new assessments, which evaluate skills such as keyboarding, word processing, creating charts and graphs, communicating and presenting, and researching. Available to all EasyTech users at no additional cost, EasyTech for PARCC/Smarter Balanced readies districts such as Flagstaff for the transition to online assessments.

“Digital literacy is already a point of emphasis for our district, and the new assessments only heighten the importance of teaching 21st century skills,” said Knight. “Learning.com will be a valuable partner in preparing our students.”

About Learning.com

Learning.com provides K–12 educators with a wealth of award-winning digital curriculum and assessments from a host of premium providers. Innovative tools help you find, manage, and use the right content for your students, and our custom services enable educators with best practices and implementation strategies. We pull everything together into streamlined, custom solutions that support your 21st century learners.