schoology®

Mount Pleasant
The Little Engine that Could

Case Study

How a Moderate District—Not the Biggest or Richest—Became the Champion for Technology in their State

Key Facts

Pittsburgh, PA

2,000+ students

Integrated G-Suite, Kahoot, ThingLink, and Other Apps

The Challenge

Mount Pleasant Area is a medium sized district near Pittsburgh, PA containing 2,000 students and 140 teachers. It covers an expansive area within Pennsylvania-the average student commute is 45 minutes. In 2013, they knew that technology offered great potential to enhance the lives of both their students and teachers. The county already had a number of students taking classes online using the Intermediate Unit's eAcademy program. eAcademy students come from many districts including Mount Pleasant Area. It was created to ensure that all students could get access to education regardless of their situation-homeschooling, injury, travel, etc. Mount Pleasant established a Technology Integration Plan, in part, as a way to introduce that same level of technology into their own classrooms.

The Technology Integration Plan began by introducing different free applications to their teachers: Kahoot, PostIt App, ThingLink, Google Apps for Education (now G-Suite), etc. They wanted to get their teachers more accustomed to using technology in the classroom, not just as a digital version of what they were doing in the classroom, but as a way to extend their practices using technology.

The Decision

By 2014, they had integrated enough disparate technology solutions that they wanted to start bringing those together. They started by teaching everyone how to integrate Google Apps for Education, now G-Suite. After a year of G-Suite utilization, they asked their teachers what they wanted from an LMS. They requested:

• Full integration with their SIS for rostering and grade passback

• A single place to not only store materials but also share them with other teachers

• A communication platform for teachers, students, and parents

• Single sign-on with all their systems

The district spent a few months researching LMS solutions as well as attending multiple conferences. Schoology kept coming up in both the research as well as at the events. It was immediately chosen as their preferred solution but was priced out as too expensive. Fortunately, Pennsylvania established "intermediate unit pricing" which allowed Mount Pleasant to afford a solution that was far superior to other systems. This dramatically lowered the costs for individual districts including Mount Pleasant.

At this point, the instructional technology head had to make a case to the superintendent. The business case was very straightforward - by unifying the various moving parts, they could create a system to meet the needs of students, including those who consider cyber options, and reduce costs to the district. The $16,000 consortium fee plus individual student tuition for eAcademy was costly and could have been more wisely invested. It was an easier pitch for kids within Mount Pleasant's district to stay in their school and get a blended learning experience instead of going elsewhere. The district superintendent agreed and they piloted Schoology with grades 7-12.

The Result

After 12+ months of using Schoology they were able to keep a number of students from shifting to other options. By creating a great educational experience they were able to recruit students back from eAcademy, keeping more of their kids in their school.

Schoology also created a better environment for those already in their classes. They changed their old make-up work process of having a secretary collect materials from every teacher, to having everything posted in Schoology. Teachers enjoyed the real-time aspect of Schoology-grades are always up-to-date in both their LMS and SIS. Parents enjoy being able to see the lesson plans and materials for their kids as well as communicate with teachers in more direct ways.

This kind of success led them to expand the technology to include a number of Swivl robots for recording and posting content in Schoology. Students who are absent have access to recorded lessons. Even better, students who attended the classes can rewatch lectures on their own time to reinforce what they learned that day. All of those recordings are hosted within Schoology along with other materials for those courses, making it easy for students to find the information they need.

Dr. Ken Williams, Director of Technology Integration, sees the possibilities of Schoology in meeting the needs of students, teachers, and parents alike. "Schoology has brought an aspect to our learning environment that conveys openness and a spirit of community. We can talk about how we lose students to other programs (cyber school) and how we pay steep tuition fees, or we can embrace that same type of system to encourage students to remain a Viking until graduation. It's simply the right decision for students."

Watch this short video walkthrough to see an LMS designed to help you measure and magnify the impact of your initiatives.

WATCH THE VIDEO