



## Case Study

# Schoolology and Teacher Learning: a Win-Win for Spartanburg 7

**Spartanburg 7 brought PD into day-to-day teaching and learning in order to drive teacher efficiency and student performance**



When Spartanburg School District 7 implemented Schoolology two years ago, Dr. Christine Horowitz, Director of Instructional Technology, recognized a great opportunity. She had been leading the district's professional development for its digital immersion initiative, 7Ignites, with an eye towards utilizing the district's available technology resources beyond student learning. Carver Middle School, an AVID-focused school that uses the Learning Forward framework for their professional learning communities (PLCs), presented the perfect opportunity. Horowitz, along with Lisa Foster, Carver's Technology Integration Specialist, and Jill Brock, Carver's Curriculum Coordinator, saw Schoolology as the ideal tool to support their PLCs.

Before Schoolology, teacher communication and resource sharing were somewhat fragmented, relying on a myriad of systems ranging from email to cloud file sharing. This made efficient use of technology to support PLCs a real challenge. Although teachers were spending more than five hours in PLCs each week, the lack of standardization often hindered their efforts to share files, feedback and reflective practices. "Evidence is very important for both Learning Forward and AVID," said Lisa Foster. "Before Schoolology, it was very difficult to prep everyone for PLCs, gather feedback, or track teacher engagement efficiently. Since its adoption, Schoolology has provided us a single platform to support all of our PLC activities."

Once Carver Middle switched to Schoolology, they knew they could break down the silos between face-to-face meetings and ongoing teacher professional learning needs. Foster says, "Teachers love face-to-face." We didn't want to take that away. Instead, we've enhanced this time by using Schoolology to make our face-to-face professional learning more efficient." Now every aspect of their PLCs has a place in Schoolology to support it as well as the continuous cycle of learning for teachers. This includes participation from administrators as they use Schoolology to collaborate with teachers, provide feedback and promote schoolwide systemic processes.

For example, each day of the week has a different focus. Monday focuses on administrative tasks; Tuesday's focus is technology integration; Wednesday introduces and reflects on instructional strategies; Thursday is time for collaborative lesson planning; and on Friday, teachers brainstorm student intervention strategies. Schoolology allows a seamless flow of vital communication and collaboration between these meeting times that supports the ongoing, sustained learning environment that defines Carver's success. Schoolology allows staff to store everything in one place, from lesson plans and resources, to discussions, polls, and feedback. "Our teachers see their PLCs as the cornerstone of their professional learning and planning here at Carver," said Foster.

The successful use of Schoology for PLCs at Carver has carried over into all the district's schools where teachers have adopted the platform as a means of teacher knowledge sharing and collaboration. "Schoology is an integral part of our teachers' essential communications and collaboration that makes it an invaluable resource for their teaching and learning," said Horowitz. Further, the district uses Schoology as an integral part of its teacher professional learning initiative. Teachers, who often face time constraints, are able to share resources and collaborate virtually with other teachers across the district as well as complete virtual, self-paced Schoology courses at any time, in any location.

Schoology did not replace the other tools their teachers use every day. Instead, it simplified their use and brought many of them under one platform. This new efficiency helped drive teacher adoption and satisfaction to close to 90% by reducing the hurdle to adopting a new system. Dr. Terry Pruitt, the district's Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, commented on the importance of teacher buy-in, "We understand the importance of having a streamlined system to communicate and collaborate. That's what we do for our students so it makes sense for our teachers also. The more comfortable teachers become with resources they use for their own learning, the more they will use those practices and technology with their students."

As the use of Schoology across the district has increased, digital learning implementation has expanded as well. This school year, the district was one of five in South Carolina selected to pilot an eLearning initiative. When the forecast calls for inclement weather, all teachers upload their curriculum and activities to Schoology where students can access and complete the assignments from home when school is closed. Completed work is counted for attendance and students and teachers are not required to make up the day later in the year. In initial surveys, 98% of teachers, 95% of parents, and 70% of students had positive experiences with the eLearning Days.

Whether an eLearning Day due to inclement weather or a "regular" school day, Schoology has been an invaluable resource for both student and teacher learning across the district. "Because we are a 1:1 district, we understand the importance of having a streamlined system of communication and collaboration that utilizes our available technologies to the fullest," said Horowitz. "Having Schoology offers us multiple ways to do so has really been a game-changer."