

CASE STUDY: HARLEM ACADEMY

A Big Leap for a Small School

Established in 2004, Harlem Academy provides high potential students with a rigorous, personal learning experience, admitting students based on merit and providing scholarships for 93% of students. In 2010, the school rebranded themselves. Part of that process included updating their website. The faculty and staff at Harlem Academy wanted to include an intranet as part of the new web site so information could be shared easily throughout the school. Schoology, an open source web site solution specifically for schools, was selected to redesign Harlem Academy's website and they recommended Schoology as a good option to provide the intranet functionality.

Britta Blodgett, Harlem Academy's Communications Director, began to investigate Schoology in January 2011. "I talked to several companies with cloud-based, open-source solutions, but I liked Schoology the best," said Britta. "They offered the right features, plus a lot of functionality we're excited to make the most of. But more than that, I was really impressed with their customer service approach. The Schoology team spent a lot of time with us answering our questions and brainstorming how we could use the system."

After meeting with Schoology several times, Britta decided to move forward with their Learning Management System in Harlem Academy's 5th - 8th grade classes.

Saving Time and Improving Instruction

Students and teachers have both adopted Schoology quickly, finding the interface intuitive and user-friendly. The time-saving features that Schoology offers have excited teachers. Prior to the implementation of Schoology, teachers had to grade quizzes by hand and track grades in Microsoft Excel or paper gradebooks. Schoology has streamlined these tasks for all of the middle school teachers. "On the administrative side, Schoology has saved everyone a lot of time," said Britta. "Our Middle School Director loves the integration with Google calendar while our history teacher is thankful for the gradebook."

In keeping with Harlem Academy's innovative, collaborative approach to education, teachers are using



Harlem Academy is an independent school (grades 1-8) that prepares bright, motivated students for success at top secondary schools and lifelong learning.

Harlem Academy provides more than \$2.3 million in scholarships annually to children in Harlem, Washington Heights, and the Bronx.

Average class size:
15 students

Full-time faculty: **18**



Schoolgy in many exciting ways. The school has harnessed the combination of Schoolgy and Khan Academy to create a new approach to teaching math. Students are assigned Khan Academy videos to watch at home and then spend class time practicing the material covered in the videos with help from the teacher as needed. Students work at their own pace, taking regular quizzes posted within Schoolgy to ensure they are ready to progress from level to level. When students are ready to take a quiz, it is available to them on Schoolgy and then it is automatically scored. Without Schoolgy this new program would not be possible.

Schoolgy's discussion feature has also made it easier for teachers to use video as part of whole class instruction. Videos posted in Schoolgy can be displayed on an electronic whiteboard while teachers ask questions, answer questions and facilitate discussion in Schoolgy – all without stopping the video.

Schoolgy is being used to maximize class time as well. Teachers post "do now" content in Schoolgy that is then displayed on an electronic whiteboard for students to see and start working on as soon as they enter the classroom. Harlem Academy's students and teachers aren't the only ones who have benefited from Schoolgy. According to Britta, "With Schoolgy, we can be even more transparent with parents. From simple things like posting the lunch menu to parents being able to access their children's grades, Schoolgy helps us avoid surprises."

Improving Efficiency and Growing Efficiently

Schoolgy has been such a success in its first school year at Harlem Academy that Britta plans to implement it with the lower school's teachers next year. Automating attendance and grades across the school will be a big step forward. "We're excited about all the possibilities Schoolgy has created for our teachers and students," said Britta. "Schoolgy will continue to grow right along with us and the system is making that an easier, more manageable process."