

Digital Content Case Study: Kent School District, WA

DISTRICT PROFILE

The Kent School District, located south of Seattle, is the fourth largest district in the state of Washington. It is a minority majority district with a diverse student population, over 120 languages spoken, and nearly 50% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

DIGITAL INNOVATION

Kent is a district where teaching and learning has changed tremendously as a result of digital tools and an innovative rethinking of the curriculum. Launched in 2005 with a single middle school academy, Kent's one-to-one computing program now serves approximately 9,000 students in grades 7-10 district-wide. A key goal of the program from day one has been to address equity issues in this diverse district, reducing the rate at which students drop out of school and helping to keep them engaged and successful by: promoting active and real-world learning; differentiating instruction; giving students choice about what they learn; reforming assessment; engaging students in conceptual and in-depth learning; and providing a sense of belonging. Rich digital content is an important part of this new approach.

According to Dani Pfeiffer, the district's director of school technology services, "There has been a gradual shift in the use of textbooks in our 1:1 classrooms. The large majority of teachers use the texts as a resource since content is frequently outdated. They rely more heavily on more current resources available on the web. Additionally, the ability for students to actually experience through simulation or visually 'see' what the educator is teaching makes it easier for them to grasp newly introduced concepts."

To the extent that textbooks still play a role in the 1:1 classroom, the district's eventual goal is to have them available digitally. "In some cases," says Pfeiffer, "texts that are used in the classroom are already available online as an e-text and come without additional cost because of our initial purchase. Other texts have been in circulation for quite some time and are not available in digital form. When we find this to be the case, we contact the publisher directly and ask if they would give us written permission to digitize the text using a purchased digitizer."

In addition to the one-to-one program, a number of high school students in the Kent schools participate in the Kent Phoenix Virtual Academy. The



content is provided by Odyssey Ware software and portions of online tools and texts, with traditional texts acting as an additional resource. Pfeiffer explains that widespread access to “limitless information” in Kent’s 1:1 and virtual programs has helped students learn to “think more critically in order to decipher information that is truly based on fact. Additionally, the ability to demonstrate their understanding of a particular skill or content area has increased. No longer are students required to simply demonstrate their understanding with paper and pencil tests. They may create a movie, participate in a blog or wiki, create a 3D object, animation or game, or share their content knowledge and understanding to a group of students several thousand miles away. Moreover, we have found great success with the ability to differentiate instruction and tailor every lesson based on each student’s academic level.”

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

The success of the program is due largely in part to continued financial support from the community. Funded by three consecutive technology levies, the 1:1 laptop program at KSD will continue to grow to include grade 11 in the fall of 2013 and grade 12 in the fall of 2014. This year’s 2,500 ninth

grade students were issued laptops that they will carry with them until they graduate high school. KSD’s successful technology integration and innovative digital curriculum draws thousands of visitors at their annual Kent Technology Expo, where teachers and students share projects and hands-on displays about the use of technology in their education.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Kent School District Success Story:
<http://www.k12blueprint.com/content/one-one-kent-washington>

Kent Phoenix Academy:
<http://www1.kent.k12.wa.us/ksd/PH/kvhs.html>

Kent 1:1 Laptop Program:
<http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/Page/3336>



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