

Vineland Public School District Assesses and Improves Technology Literacy with Learning.com

TechLiteracy Assessment™ measures student technology literacy and EasyTech® enables curriculum enhancements

Innovation: District uses objective information about students’ technology learning to guide curriculum improvements.

Solution: TechLiteracy Assessment, EasyTech

DISTRICT PROFILE:

- 10,692 students in 20 schools
- White 31.6%
- Black 21.1%
- Hispanic 45.3%
- Asian / Pacific Islander 1.7%
- American Indian/ Alaskan Native .3%

District Profile

Vineland Public School District in Vineland, New Jersey is a local leader in technology, with one of the largest Metropolitan Area Networks in the country connecting all schools in the district, as well as local utilities and public buildings. With almost 5,000 computers and a host of online resources, the entire district is provided with a state-of-the-art technology system. Vineland’s technology plan seeks to use this technological framework to bring its diverse student body the education and skills they need to thrive in an increasingly technological world.

The technology department’s mission statement lays out the district’s goal in relation to technology learning: “that all students should learn to access technology to gather, evaluate, process, and represent information in meaningful ways.” The successful integration of technology into curriculum—to teach technology skills as well as reinforce core subject learning—is essential to meeting that goal.

Classified as an Abbott district, or “poorer urban district”, by the 1990 Abbott vs. Burke Supreme Court ruling, Vineland has an additional responsibility to ensure that all students receive a thorough and efficient education.

The Challenge

With the technology in place and a mission statement to uphold, Vineland educators needed an effective and efficient way to teach students technology skills in addition to the core curriculum.

Despite the ever-increasing national and state requirements for technology education, Vineland educators and administrators also had no objective way to assess students’ knowledge and skills. Stephen Dantinne, Supervisor of Technology for the district, recognized the need for objective information about what students were actually learning—information that could help set a direction for the future. “We needed to define technology literacy, and find out if our students were achieving it,” he shares. “The requirements were in place, but there was no testing to quantitatively, objectively, measure it.”

The Learning.com Solution

The Vineland Public School District turned to Learning.com for help with or resources for technology integration and assessment. With TechLiteracy Assessment, the district finally had a way to measure and assess student achievement. And with EasyTech, the district found a solution that would make integrating technology into core curriculum an achievable goal.

“I was so intrigued by TechLiteracy Assessment, we participated in the beta program,” Dantine says. “I realized TechLiteracy Assessment would give us the information we needed to set a direction for the future by letting us look at what we are teaching and what we should be teaching. With TechLiteracy Assessment, we are able to assess where we are, set a baseline, and then move from there to do better.”

Results

TechLiteracy Assessment gave the district an online, easy-to-administer way to assess students’ technology literacy. Dantine especially appreciated the fact that results were available shortly after testing so they could start focusing on improvement right away. After all fifth-grade students were tested, Dantine got teachers and administrators together to share the results. He also created CDs with the results so teachers could explore them more thoroughly on their own.

Among the results Dantine shared: Students were strong in presentation skills and were able to identify a good presentation when they saw one; however, they weren’t able to create a good presentation. Dantine is looking forward to using EasyTech’s presentation curriculum to address that weakness.

TechLiteracy Assessment also revealed an overall lack of spreadsheet skills—no surprise to Dantine who admits that neither students nor teachers are as enthusiastic about spreadsheet software as they are presentation software. EasyTech’s technology curriculum provides a perfect complement to TechLiteracy Assessment’s evaluation. “EasyTech provides excellent spreadsheet instruction to

address our weaknesses, especially for younger grades” shares Dantine. “And EasyTech helps teachers understand what they should teach, and helps them figure out how to teach it.”

“There is a veneer of knowledge that many students have, but some of the deeper concepts aren’t being absorbed,” explains Dantine of the assessment results. This objective information will guide curriculum decisions. “Teachers are looking at the results and looking for the best way to solve the problems and guide their curriculum.”

Next year Vineland Public School District will use TechLiteracy Assessment with eighth-graders to ensure that when they reach high school they have the skills necessary to use technology tools to create projects for their core subject classes.

“Technology is how people communicate today,” says Dantine. “And we need to do better at teaching those critical skills.” With EasyTech and TechLiteracy Assessment, the district has the tools in place to help teachers and students succeed. “We’re eager to see improvements really working, and to see our test scores going up,” anticipates Dantine.