

Clear Creek Independent School District

ENRICHING THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

As one of the leading school districts in the United States for integrating technology into the classroom, Clear Creek Independent School District (CCISD) is always looking for ways to improve student learning through technology. Located on the Texas Gulf Coast between Houston and Galveston, CCISD has a strong culture of cooperation and collaboration between the technology department and the department of instruction.

In 2007, CCISD completed one of the fastest implementations of the Blackboard Learn™ platform. With the help of the Blackboard team, the district trained 264 core curriculum high school teachers on the technology well within a six-month timeframe. Today, more than 4000 teachers in 42 schools and education centers successfully use Blackboard products and services to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Building upon that success, CCISD has now added NBC Learn resources to their online curriculum district-wide in an effort to further engage students. NBC Learn K-12 is a collection of historic and current events videos, primary source documents and images, specifically designed for use in the K-12 classroom.

“We were looking for a way to stimulate classroom discussions and bring the curriculum to life,” says Lea Castillo,

director of learning technology. “Adding the NBC Learn videos to Blackboard gave us the strong combination needed to achieve our goal.”

Easy to Use

CCISD began using NBC Learn as a pilot program in the beginning of 2010. Using a select group of schools, and with training and support from the NBC Learn team, the district found the teachers quickly adopting the easy-to-use technology.

“A requirement we had for NBC Learn was that it had to be easy to manage, not only from a technology perspective, but also regarding ease-of-use for the teachers,” says Castillo. “We found the technical integration to be seamless and teachers were able to easily pull the videos into their lesson plans on Blackboard.”

The pilot program was such a success, CCISD decided to implement NBC Learn district-wide in July 2010. “Teachers can sometimes be hesitant to adopt new technologies, but we had strong buy-in from our teachers once they saw the value of the videos, the ease-of-use, and the relevancy to their classroom discussions,” says Paula Brewton, integration specialist at Clear Springs High School.

The program has been very successful, with NBC Learn seeing record-breaking usage from the school district. CCISD is currently using between 1,100 and 1,500

videos per month. In a recent survey, 92 percent of CCISD teachers said NBC Learn enhances their ability to teach within the Blackboard Learn application.

“The videos are typically short enough that teachers can use them at the beginning of a discussion to get the students interested and actively participating,” says Brewton.

Current Events to Stimulate Learning

One of the most popular aspects of NBC Learn has been the current events video selection, which is updated daily. CCISD teachers are using the videos as real-world examples of concepts they are teaching in class while also getting students closer to real-time information.

High school teacher Tracy Lafoy uses the videos in her Advance Placement Government class as well as her Leadership class. “I use the videos to explain ideas as they relate to candidates, court cases, public service and committees within Congress. NBC Learn helps get the kids’ attention because they can see government in action.”

Lafoy uses many current videos to get her points across, but likes to use the video of George W. Bush announcing his running mate when teaching about political candidates. “The video gives my students first-hand information of

an actual candidacy and they can hear comments by professional consultants regarding the strategy behind the decisions that are being made," says Lafoy.

Videos are typically used at the beginning of her classes to stimulate discussion. Once the video finishes, she has discussion questions ready to focus the student collaboration. "The kids like the real-world approach versus listening to a lecture. The videos definitely stimulate more questions," says Lafoy. "Blackboard helps provide the information my students need while NBC Learn acts as an enriching experience."

Lafoy also uses the videos to create make-up assignments for students. "The videos are very easy to find in the system, and I can quickly drop them into Blackboard for students who miss class. This gives my students the ability to complete the assignment from anywhere," says Lafoy.

The Science of Sports

While the current event videos are very popular, other categories are also being used heavily. Teachers at CCISD are using the videos in many disciplines including Language Arts, Science, Business, and more.

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Science Specialist Heather Wallace uses NBC Learn to give students real-world examples of physics. Specifically, she uses the Science of NFL Football and the Science of the Olympic Winter Games collections to address specific scientific concepts. "The students like it. They can see the physics happening in slow motion using a topic that is interesting to them," says Wallace.

Students in Physics classes have recently been watching a series of videos on the Olympic Winter Games. The students have most enjoyed the videos on aerial skiing to learn about trajectory and curling to see the science behind friction. "The videos grab their attention by having the professional athletes talk about the physics of their movements," says Wallace.

The videos are put into the Blackboard Learn application so that students can continue to discuss the topic or writing assignments on what they have seen. "Blackboard allows the teachers to integrate the videos right into curriculum, giving an easy way to base lesson plans around a video," says Wallace.

Looking Ahead

CCISD has seen great success in integrating NBC Learn resources into the Blackboard Learn platform due to the district's culture of planning, collaboration and teamwork, along with the ease-of-use of both technologies. But the district sees more growth to come. "Many teachers are hearing about the great uses of NBC Learn through word-of-mouth from the teachers who were early adopters," says Brewton. "They then come to see me to find out how they can utilize the technology themselves."

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Castillo agrees, "We are able to get interested teachers up-to-speed quickly thanks to the supportive nature of both companies in providing online tutorials and other training. This makes it easy for the teachers to get started and embrace the technology."

As for the students, there is no doubt that the videos are a hit. Both Lafoy and Wallace agree that their students are much more excited about what they are learning. "The kids definitely prefer the shorter videos compared to watching traditional documentaries."

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Blackboard K-12

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 **NBC LEARN**

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