

Albuquerque Public Schools

LEVERAGING THE POWER OF VIDEO TO STIMULATE LEARNING

The Albuquerque Public Schools System (APS), located in the heart of New Mexico, is a very progressive group of schools because it leverages technology both to stimulate learning and to prepare students for higher education. With 13,000 teachers in 140 schools, APS serves more than 87,000 students.

The Blackboard Learn™ platform plays an important role throughout the district and will serve as a focal point as the school district expands to offer more classes in an online environment. APS initially added online courses to help students who may have failed a class or fallen behind in course work make up credits. Then, as part of the common core standards for education, APS expanded their offering of online classes to include mainstream curriculum subjects, with the goal to help students become familiar with learning on their own since many colleges offer online as well as traditional classes.

As a way to further engage students, APS more recently licensed NBC Learn content and installed the NBC Learn Building Block on their Blackboard Learn platform to help support their growing online and traditional curriculum. 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. Teachers can seamlessly integrate NBC Learn content into lesson plans within Blackboard. "I quickly saw that the videos would add great foundational knowledge as a basis for new classroom discussions," said Amy Phipps, head of Instructional Learning Technology for APS.



After a brief trial period, Phipps decided to make the NBC Learn Building Block available district-wide. "Teachers quickly understood the value of NBC Learn and found it easy to use," said Phipps. "We are still seeing very high adoption rates as teachers find out about it." In fact, classrooms within

APS currently view more than 1,300 videos per month – not including individual views by students that may download the video to their personal computers to watch at a later time. “The implementation was a very quick and easy process, even for a district of our size,” added Phipps.

High school teacher and librarian Heather Dahl uses the videos to teach students the importance of doing thorough research and proper citing of sources. “I like to show the series of videos about the Jayson Blair scandal, the New York Times reporter that was caught plagiarizing,” said Dahl. “It gives the students a real-world view of the consequences of not doing authentic work.”

In addition to using the videos to stimulate class discussions, Dahl has her students use NBC Learn as a research database in order to complete school papers. The “NBC Learn [repositories are] easy for the students to search and quickly find information relevant to their topic of interest,” said Dahl. “They particularly like the citation tool as it makes the video just as easy and credible to cite as a book.”

Dahl sees the videos as a good resource for the students. “NBC does a great job of bringing the videos into a constructive use for education,” said Dahl. “The videos get the students’ attention and get them more involved in their education.” High school social studies teacher Tess Sanchez agrees. “This year, all of my courses are online and I’ve noticed that the NBC videos help my students keep up with class work because they are more engaged in what they are learning.”

Sanchez likes to use the videos to teach the more complex topics. “Some topics are hard to teach in a traditional way and the NBC videos help put those topics in terms students can better understand,” said Sanchez. One such video is Learning Economics Through Pizza. The video shows a middle school teacher starting a pizza business and uses the pie to explain the different aspects of running a business. “It’s a great way to introduce students to economics and the free market system,” added Sanchez.

Other favorite topics for teachers include history and government. “Students especially like the history videos on the sinking of the Lusitania, World War II, and Vietnam,” said Sanchez. “Seeing history in motion helps hook the students into the topic.” For government, her classes have begun following the 2012 Presidential debate and use past debates to understand difficult topics. “The Al Gore/George Bush debate regarding the Electoral College does a great job of explaining how this complex process works,” added Sanchez.

Both teachers agree that the best aspect of the system is its ease of use. “Within three clicks of a mouse, I can embed a video right into my lesson plan to my Blackboard course and not have to worry about any broken links. This gives me the peace of mind to know my students can watch the videos at anytime, whether at school or home, without any problems,” said Dahl.

Sanchez adds, “The videos are nice and short and there is no extra software to download to make them work.” Both teachers also find it nice that NBC offers such credible content, which saves them time. Traditionally, most teachers have to go through the time consuming process of creating their own content for class discussions.



The response has been impressive from teachers and students alike, Blackboard and NBC Learn have helped increase student engagement to better prepare our students for the rest of their lives.

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