

Tennessee District Prepares Students for Online Assessments with EasyTech

Students at one Jefferson County school inspire district-wide implementation.

Student-Driven Progress

After Jefferson Elementary School finished its 30-day trial with EasyTech, the school's principal experienced something that had never happened before. A student approached him and said, "We really liked that typing program, but we don't get to use it anymore. Will you get it back for us?"

That interaction inspired a phone call from the principal to Sally Musick-Meredith, an instructional technology specialist at Jefferson County Schools, and EasyTech quickly emerged as the entire district's comprehensive digital literacy curriculum for K-8. EasyTech is the self-paced, interactive program from Learning.com, designed to teach students basic technology skills, online safety, keyboarding and word processing.



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Rallying a Community Around Technology

Jefferson County is a rural, farming community at the base of the Smoky Mountains in Eastern Tennessee. All 13 schools in the Jefferson County Schools district, which enrolls 7,200 students, qualify for Title I funding. In an area where at-home Internet connectivity remains spotty, the schools serve as the community's technology hub. The district even hosts a "Science Technology Engineering Math [STEM] Night" where technology is highlighted. Parents and community members are invited to come try out the technology students use in class.

In her second year as an instructional technology specialist, Musick-Meredith emphasizes the importance of teaching digital literacy skills since that's the primary way students communicate. "We asked parents if typing and formal technology skills were something they worked on at home with their children, and the response was, 'no,'" says Musick-Meredith. "That's when we really began to sense the urgency and need for EasyTech."

Preparing for PARCC

With forthcoming next-generation assessments, such as Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), students will be required to complete tests online. Formal technology skills like keyboarding are essential for students to convey their thoughts and ideas during online tests. Moreover, the skills students learn with EasyTech are critical for college and career readiness.

“We need to understand that this generation of students is immersed in a digital world,” says Musick-Meredith. “If we’re not teaching them digital responsibility, then what are we doing for them? Students need to learn that there is a whole bunch of responsibility that comes with technology. It’s about more than testing.”

Loved by Students

“Before I started using Learning.com, I was typing really slowly,” says one elementary school student at the district. “Now, I’m able to type really fast. It’s a really good experience.”

“I’m excited when my teacher says to get on Learning.com because it taught me how to type,” says another student. “I was really stressing out about the [Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program] writing test because I didn’t know how to type at all before. But now I can because of Learning.com.”

About Learning.com

Learning.com is a national leader in providing digital literacy solutions that help prepare students for online assessments, school, college and their future careers. The company offers a complete digital literacy curriculum for grades K-8 that engages students as they develop critical skills such as keyboarding, business applications, online safety, computational thinking and coding. Founded in 1999, Learning.com currently partners with one in six U.S. school districts and serves more than 4 million students each year. The company has earned more than 30 industry awards, including ISTE 2017 Best of Show, 2017 Award of Excellence from “Tech & Learning Magazine” and “The Oregonian’s Top Workplace” for 2017 and 2016.

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Embraced by Teachers

“Feedback from teachers at Jefferson County Schools has been overwhelmingly positive,” says Musick-Meredith.

Teachers have the freedom to incorporate EasyTech instruction in a variety of ways. In many instances, students complete the online lessons in mobile computer labs that circulate throughout the classrooms.

“There’s one constant, teachers and students love EasyTech,” says Musick-Meredith. “Teachers are amazed at what their students are learning and they’ve realized how much our students were lacking those skills before. I take that as 100 percent satisfaction.”