

New York Students Acquire Tech Skills During Everyday Instruction

Using Learning.com’s digital literacy curriculum, students in New Rochelle master word processing, spreadsheets and internet safety.

At one large suburban school system in Westchester County, New York, an online assessment tool first used to comply with state law is now the foundation for a district-wide technology program that’s preparing students for life beyond their school days.

Gauging Student Understanding

Christine Coleman, director of technology for the City School District of New Rochelle, introduced TechLiteracy Assessments from Learning.com several years ago to determine how well eighth grade students had grasped lessons on cyberbullying and internet safety. While New York state required assessments of eighth-grade students, Coleman evaluated fifth graders as well, to identify gaps that needed to be addressed over the following three years.

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“Assessing fifth grade students allowed us to see patterns and trends,” says Coleman, who has her doctorate in computer science and education. “We could then target instruction of technical skills to better prepare our students for the 21st century.”

A New Approach to Technology

New Rochelle chose to implement Learning.com’s EasyTech curriculum, which includes level-appropriate instruction on basic computer knowledge, word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, and internet safety. This approach resulted in a more robust technology program that has closed technology skills gaps and expanded digital literacy to prepare students for computerized assessments.

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Results-Based Instruction

EasyTech features self-paced lessons and games to practice skills, activities to reinforce concepts, and quizzes to check understanding, all of which are aligned to the ISTE Standards and support the Common Core anchor standards. The program also includes content creation, which allows students to practice creative writing while learning concrete technology skills, which translates to better results on standardized testing, Coleman says.

“We found when we increased instruction of spreadsheets, charts and graphs in EasyTech, students did better in state exams that used them,” Coleman adds.

This past summer, Coleman and a middle school principal identified gaps in word processing skills for eighth-grade students. As a result, this year classes were expanded to incorporate more word processing and writing skills to address these gaps.

Flexibility to Meet Student Needs

“We analyzed the fifth and eighth-grade assessment results and realized that students needed more electronic writing experience,” Coleman says. “There’s a different thought and creation process from the brain to the keyboard, as opposed to writing on paper. Students need more opportunities for electronic writing to practice these skills and to ensure college and career readiness.”

The flexibility of EasyTech allows teachers to use interactive whiteboards, learning centers or individual computers for lessons. Coleman can also run a variety of reports, ranging from how an individual student has performed over time to how the entire district compares nationally.

Expanded Instruction for Common Core

The broad reach also helps prepare students for life outside New Rochelle schools. “We expand instruction so students can use all these tools—word processing, spreadsheets, presentations—whether it’s Microsoft Office or Google Apps, so they can be an effective communicator with any program they encounter,” she says. “We’re giving students tech skills aligned with the Common Core but with modalities they can access 24/7.”

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EasyTech also includes features addressing higher-level topics such as cyberbullying, digital footprints, usernames and passwords and posting images online. “They need to understand that nothing is really erased from the internet,” Coleman says. “It is great baseline instruction for them, especially as they are applying to colleges and preparing for their future.

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.