

Rhode Island District Undergoes Two-Year Technology Transformation

North Providence School District steps into 21st century with help from Learning.com and EasyTech.

Time to Modernize

The year before Melinda Smith arrived at North Providence School District as superintendent in 2012, the district lacked an email system and the classrooms only had a few computers in them. A budgetary crisis, combined with a limited vision for technology integration, left North Providence with “bare-bones” technology. With high stakes online testing on the horizon, Smith and her colleagues hatched a plan to bring the district into the 21st century.

“We set out to create a fast track to where our students and teachers should be, and the transformation has been incredible,” Smith says.

“ Having used the EasyTech curriculum at my previous district, I knew the program would effectively get our students up to speed with their technology skills. ”



In addition to some creative budget work, North Providence secured grant funding through a local philanthropist and immediately initiated a systematic deployment of technology throughout its nine school buildings. In a short period of time, classrooms were equipped with interactive whiteboards, document cameras and more computers than ever before.

Online Assessments Create Sense of Urgency

With PARCC assessments looming, Smith knew North Providence students needed to develop formal technology skills, such as keyboarding and computer manipulation, in order to be successful while taking the online assessments. Her first step was implementing EasyTech from Learning.com.

“Having used the EasyTech curriculum at my previous district, I knew the program would effectively get our students up to speed with their technology skills,” Smith says. “We evolved our libraries into media centers, and our librarians played a vital role in helping students build their skills.”

After completing less than 10 EasyTech lessons, the North Providence third grade students completed PARCC pilot assessments. Since students only had a few weeks working with computers at school, Smith and administrators were worried the online format would trip-up students.

“We thought, given the short amount of time students had been using computers, that the technology would be a barrier for them,” Smith says. “But the students were very comfortable with the testing. EasyTech is the reason students were able to be successful in applying their knowledge in the new online format.”

Community Rallies Around Technology

With so much change in such a short amount of time, some might wonder how the students, parents and teachers reacted to Smith’s ambitious roadmap. In one word: enthusiastically.

“North Providence has a unique group of teachers,” Smith says. “They’re so hungry for the technology and additional curriculum resources. They’re extremely receptive, and the level of engagement with new technology and curriculum is remarkable to see.”

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The excitement didn’t stop with teachers.

Smith casually surveyed a few fourth grade students about their experiences using the computers and programs such as EasyTech during library sessions. From their overwhelming enthusiastic response, she knew North Providence was on the right path.

Parents, too, understood the importance of digital literacy curriculum.

“Parents have been a driving force behind this change because they know their children need these skills in order to be successful in college and beyond,” Smith says. “It’s been amazing to watch our community come together on this initiative.”

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.