

Case Study

Skowhegan Area Middle School: A statewide 1 to 1

Skowhegan Area Middle School: A statewide 1-to-1 laptop program is about more than technology literacy – it's about dynamic content in a dynamic learnspace. Here is one school's story.

Challenge

In 2000, the state of Maine introduced a plan to advance technology literacy among school-aged children. The technology-driven movement became known as the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI). In the initial phase of MLTI, from 2002-2004, all middle schools in the state of Maine were required to implement a one-to-one learning environment, in which each teacher and student was provided a personal laptop. As part of this initiative, Skowhegan Area Middle School (SAMS) was faced with the challenge of integrating technology into its classroom instruction and curriculum. SAMS had an immediate need for a technology platform on which its teachers, students and school community could operate and interact.

Solution

Prior to the statewide one-to-one initiative, SAMS had incorporated a content management system into its classrooms; however, the solution that was in place lacked the characteristics of a complete technology solution and was not equipped to handle the technological demands that accompanied MLTI. Many schools within the state of Maine had previously implemented open source solutions within their classrooms. Since SAMS had not implemented an open source solution and did not have a stable technology platform in place, Studywiz Spark, the first and only Dynamic LearnSpace for K-12 education, was designated as its technology solution.

"We are aggressively training our teachers to use the platform and are pleased to see that those currently using it are experiencing increased interaction with their students," said Laura Richter, Technology Integrationist, Skowhegan Area Middle School. "In our school for grades 7-8, which operates in a community setting, most teachers and students are using Studywiz Spark on a daily basis. They are engaging in interactive learning, and the teachers find that they now have the ability to create content that is specific to each student's educational needs and learning styles. Studywiz Spark has given our teachers the power to deliver personalized learning and strengthen relationships with their students."

From the onset of its engagement with Studywiz Spark, SAMS noticed a significant improvement among its classrooms. The school has experienced a host of benefits, like personalized learning, content management and backup for teacher and student-generated files, as a result of having access to multimedia capabilities within Studywiz Spark. Studywiz Spark provides a safe and secure space for learning, in which teachers, students and parents can access multimedia-rich content, from any place, at any time, from any device. With Studywiz Spark, SAMS has been able to implement a technology platform to complement the one-to-one learning environment and support the technological needs of the 21st Century classroom.

Results

At SAMS, Studywiz Spark has proven to be an effective solution to establishing a successful one-to-one environment. As a result of the implementation of the Dynamic LearnSpace, SAMS has integrated laptop technology and multimedia-rich content into daily classroom instruction. Studywiz Spark promotes a collaborative and interactive setting for education.

"The virtual setting created by Studywiz Spark fosters a collaborative learning environment that enhances the frequency and depth of teacher, student and parent interaction in education," said Richter. "It enables teachers to manage content and incorporate the multimedia applications that engage students most, like videos, web links and audio clips."

Studywiz Spark is helping SAMS to re-engage its teachers, students and parents in an interactive and connected virtual space for learning.

“Studywiz Spark has become a tool to house the essentials to the classes I teach,” said Scott Bosworth, Pathways Teacher, Skowhegan Area Middle School. “The discussion application is one of my favorites! It provides a way for students to communicate about content and assignments with students in their classes, as well as those in other classes. It also gives me the ability to design unique activities to engage my students. I use the discussion application to have students turn in assignments like reflections and research findings; this allows me to have a more interactive experience with my students. Studywiz Spark is a great tool, and I am looking forward to the enhancements that will be available for the upcoming school year.”

All teachers at SAMS have received initial training on Studywiz Spark, and, to date, approximately fifty percent of all classrooms are accessing the Dynamic LearnSpace on a daily basis. Teachers who are more tech-savvy and have a strong interest in unifying their lesson plans with an easy-to-access, multimedia-compatible platform have shown a consistent use of Studywiz Spark within the last school year.

“Teachers are taking advantage of the many multimedia capabilities that Studywiz Spark provides – they are creating and maintaining calendars, transferring files, regularly backing up assignments, encouraging students to manage their work in eLocker, distributing announcements and posting discussions, polls and quizzes,” said Richter. “At SAMS, we see this as the first step in an aggressive initiative to familiarize teachers and students with the technology-oriented learning environment.”

Studywiz Spark enhances engagement for all users by providing a virtual environment that incorporates multimedia-rich content. During the next school year, SAMS hopes to see one hundred percent use of Studywiz Spark – all teachers and students accessing the Dynamic LearnSpace on a daily basis – as the school will be providing additional training and will require all teachers to be actively involved with Studywiz Spark. Another area SAMS hopes to explore is the use of handhelds within the classroom.

“At SAMS, the goal is, and always has been, to incorporate programs like Studywiz Spark to meet the demands of the 21st Century learning environment,” said Richter. “We have been given a number of iPods and are working to integrate them into the classroom setting. I think we are at the point where some administrators and teachers are not fully aware of the potential that handhelds possess, and the challenge will be to determine how these devices best fit into the education scene.”

Studywiz Spark has been a successful complement to MLTI, and it has satisfied the technological needs at SAMS. It has allowed teachers and students to participate in an interactive learning environment and has provided access to educational content at all times.

“As educators and administrators, it is our job to prepare our students for the future,” said Richter. “Studywiz Spark is helping us pave the way by providing a place where students can cultivate strong relationships with technology and education.”

For further information on Studywiz Spark visit www.studywiz.com