Competency-based Education

Franklin West Supervisory Union - Building Digital Infrastructure to Improve Student Outcomes

How does your organization define competency-based education?

In FWSU, proficiency (competency/mastery) is defined as a demonstration of progress, seen via a body of evidence, in an articulated set of prioritized, cross-cutting transferable skills. At any juncture when reporting proficiency, a student must be "advancing: making progress, going forward, accomplishing." Exhibitions of learning, with evidence of growing proficiency, are gleaned from coursework, personalization, and flexible pathways. This "body of evidence," represents this continuous progress and is the exhibition platform for demonstratingproficiency. There are no grades. There is a shift to a proficiency transcript.

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http://digitalpromise.org/cbe_resource/franklin-west-supervisory-union-digital-infrastructure-student-outcomes

Overview

At FWSU, we viewed building our infrastructure as an opportunity. In a global era, technology becomes an essential tool for students. As superintendent, I knew that technology did not define our district's purpose, but that it was critical to our mission. If our students were to be fully prepared for their future, they would need 21st century classrooms that included integrated technology. Our first step was to develop our administrative team into a cadre of digital leaders.

Beliefs

We started our work by developing one centralized action plan that changed our system - a system that was comprised of three independent school districts coupled together in a loose confederation named a "supervisory union." How? We unbridled our thinking from just test scores and started looking at what was important for our students' future. Test scores matter, but we know that our students need so much more. We allowed ourselves to dream.

We identified four target areas for our action plan; proficiency-based student-centered learning, student leadership, engaged community partners, and flexible learning environments. These became understandable, simple targets. They were simple to grasp, easy for parents and teachers to believe in, and made our schools feel more human and less industrial.

Rationale

Our organization is in tune with the world that our students live in outside of school. It is our belief that schools need to mirror that world as much as possible. We are moving forward in order to provide our students with the best opportunities to succeed in a digital-age learning culture.

Outcomes

Since we began our work five years ago, our infrastructure has changed dramatically. We have a state of the art WAN and LAN. We have 1:1 iPad deployment in grades 3-12 and 3:1 in K-2. Our districts have also invested in a common LMS ecosystem and data management system to facilitate the work of CBE.

Surprises

We did not anticipate the speed of the change once we had begun our transformation. Students and teachers moved quickly.

Trade-offs

It is a constant struggle to remind everyone to maintain a balance. Moving to a digital culture does not mean everything needs to be digital. Just like life outside of school, some tasks are great digitally and some are better suited for non-digital.

Considerations

Never say "we can't afford it." We are a small rural district who made the commitment to change our direction and reviewed our budget to make the leap. It costs money, but if it is important, then it is worth the price. However, resources are limited and choices will need to be made.

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Artifacts

We blog about the work of our district everyday and reference our action plan targets (mentioned above). There are many examples documented each day on the FWSU Story (blog). Here are a few examples:

- [iPads Arrive (2012)](#)

- [Flexible Learning and Infrastructure (2015)](#)

- [Schoology Arrives at FWSU (2015)](#)

- [Taking Action Through Alpine (2017)](#)

- [FWSU Apple Distinguished Program (2016)](#)

- [FWSU Adopts Panorama Student Surveys (2015)](#)

- [FWSU Accepted into League of Innovative Schools (2015)](#)