ABC-CLIO Databases Play Significant Role in Vancouver Public Schools’ Evolution to Digital-Based World History and Social Studies Curriculum

Online databases provide cost-effective and comprehensive online resources to support new 21st-century learning pathways and programs

SITUATION

Vancouver Public Schools is dedicated to providing an innovative learning environment that engages and empowers students to develop the knowledge and essential skills to become competent, responsible, and compassionate citizens.

Vancouver Public Schools has a vision for its students to assume an active role in setting goals, monitoring their own progress, and making decisions about their education. In order to make this vision a reality, administrators, curriculum directors, educators, and teacher-librarians are working to create new learning pathways and innovative program choices to address the needs and interests of teachers and learners using online databases and a wide range of resources.

The district is fortunate to have Mark Ray, a former teacher librarian at Skyview High School. Truly embracing every aspect of the role of librarian, he was actively involved in instruction as well as with working with the district in Instructional Technology. As a result of his accomplishments, Ray was selected as Washington’s 2012 Teacher of the Year.

Following the district’s vision, Ray has worked to move all of the district’s librarians to become technology leaders. Targeted training has been accomplished for four years with federal funding. Future training includes training librarians as peer instructional collaborators and as coaches. The librarians will then help teachers take the next step to integrate technology into the curriculum. Ray says, “We are developing 21st-century information ninjas!”
Challenge

Vancouver District needed to find a way to cost-effectively expand and enhance 10th grade world history and social studies curricula using online resources. After years of using online sources to support a wide range of curriculum, Ray worked with the district to develop an initiative to transform the 10th grade world history and social studies curriculum among all six of its high schools. To begin the shift, the district needed to find a comprehensive, authoritative, and rich alternative to traditional textbooks.

SOLUTION

After using the ABC-CLIO databases for three years and viewing an in-district demo put together by Ray, the Vancouver District decided to use ABC-CLIO’s American Government, Daily Life through History, World at War, and World History: Ancient and Medieval Eras databases to teach beyond what was covered in traditional textbooks. “Teachers already knew how to use them, and liked the ability within the databases to create their own reading lists,” said Ray.

To build the core of the new social studies and world history courses, Ray worked closely with curriculum director Layne Curtis; Kathy Wolfley, District Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator for Secondary Schools; and Lynn Schedler, a social studies teacher at Skyview High School. He collaborated with four of Vancouver District’s social studies and history teachers to create electronic resource binders. Comprising a core webpage with a variety of resources, the binders provided extensive links to ABC-CLIO databases in order to provide the support teachers needed for each unit.

“The development of the binders is completely collaborative. Teacher librarians work together to contribute coordinating the content and identify resources for specific units.” Once the binders were created, they became living documents, and could be changed and adapted as teachers and administrators saw fit.

“The ABC-CLIO databases are the perfect tool for us to use in this first step towards using only e-text,” explained Ray. “The organizational structure of the databases has the consistent look of an e-textbook. They look and behave like e-textbooks, evoking the sense of a modern textbook to students.”

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—Mark Ray, Director of Instructional Technology and Library Services
ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING AND ANALYSIS

ABC-CLIO’s databases are helping Vancouver District’s high schools to provide students with diverse learning opportunities 24/7, 365 days a year. The district is using the databases as a part of its innovative 10th grade initiative to provide students and educators with cutting-edge 21st-century learning tools and curricula, as well as to foster a flexible, dynamic, relevant, and engaging learning environment. “Students use the ABC-CLIO databases in a way that builds information literacy and teaches them how to work independently to analyze information and strengthen their critical thinking skills,” states Ray. “They have been a valuable tool in preparing students for such a highly competitive global economy, and the shift to online resources will help ensure our students are prepared for success not only in college and their careers, but also in life.” With these resources in his media center, he lets students know that research is accessible.

THE FUTURE

Vancouver Public Schools decided against purchasing any more textbooks for this course. Instead, they will use current texts as appropriate and add more ABC-CLIO databases to supplement required materials and resources. “Changing and enhancing our social studies curriculum is the first step. World Studies for the 10th grade will be planned for this coming year,” said Ray.

After beginning the evolution of 10th grade world history and social studies curriculum into a 21st-century format, Ray initiated a “Bring-Your-Own-Device” pilot at Vancouver District’s Skyview Senior High and at two other schools. “This is a profound step for the district, and there are many interesting implications,” said Ray.

He welcomed students to use laptops, smartphones, tablets, and other mobile devices to access ABC-CLIO databases and digital resources. “Students love quality digital information sources. BYOD makes those resources available anytime they’re needed.”

EVALUATING SUCCESS

ABC-CLIO’s databases have played a large part in helping Vancouver District’s high schools to create flexible learning environments that have the capacity and a sustainable support system for using abundant and embedded technology as a learning tool. Students and teachers are happy with the databases and look forward to the next steps towards shifting to e-textbooks.

“Thanks to the rich, authoritative, and cost-effective resources provided by ABC-CLIO’s digital databases, our 10th-grade initiative and shift to e-textbooks has been successful and widely supported by the district,” said Ray. “The cost of the ABC-CLIO databases compared to the cost of textbooks is not even close. The district’s leaders, administrators, teachers, and parents are able to see the value in that.” Teachers continue to request additional databases and resources, and other schools within the district are following suit and looking into subscribing to ABC-CLIO’s databases.

“The handwriting is on the wall—kids don’t use printed materials for research anymore. The idea that kids will use textbooks for learning is blithely ignorant. Whether it is e-textbooks or databases, we have to look at them as supplementary texts. It is just essential.”
# Quick Facts

**Vancouver Public Schools**
- 21 elementary schools, six middle schools, five high schools, an arts school, a STEM school, and three additional programs
- 23,500 students enrolled

**Primary Objective:** To promote relevant and meaningful teaching and learning to prepare students for success in high school and beyond

**ABC-CLIO Databases Used:**
- American Government
- World History: Ancient and Medieval Eras
- Daily Life through History
- World at War: Understanding Conflict and Society

**DISTRICT LEADER**
Mark Ray
Director of Instructional Technology and Library Services, Vancouver Public Schools and Former Teacher Librarian, Skyview High School, WAX