ABC-CLIO Online Solutions: Key to Leading-Edge Strategy for “Anytime, Anywhere”

Learning at Lake Placid Central School District

SITUATION

Lake Placid Junior-Senior High School is located in a resort community which includes an Olympic training facility. Thus, it is diverse sociologically, with children of the shop owners and service people, as well as from the Olympic community and from surrounding rural agricultural areas. In addition, the whole district must provide for New York State's mandate for blended learning. This all requires online accessibility.

Rather than perceiving this as a problem, those at Lake Placid Central School District embrace the situation and feel that its resolution perfectly fits with their view of their future. Its superintendent has a vision of providing a quality education for this wide range of student needs through an online “anytime, anywhere” learning program, with the school library as the center for technological resources.

A key goal of this strategy is to encourage the Olympic community to make a long-term commitment to Lake Placid schools, even when students must relocate several times per year. In addition, the district sees an opportunity for other students with similar flexibility needs to attend Lake Placid via online courses without ever physically attending within the district. Perhaps some of their future students won't even live in the Lake Placid district.

In painful economic times, Lake Placid Central School District is developing an innovative approach to attract additional students and funding.

Challenge: Truly Accessible Resources

In order to provide an education program with such flexibility, as well as to address the mandate for blended learning, Lake Placid needed to develop complete online accessibility, along with an implementation plan for effective use of those resources by teachers and students. Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES has already taken a step in this direction by providing consortia purchasing of all ABC-CLIO Solutions through EBSCO.

SOLUTION

In this new world, the school library provides the library resources program as well as technology integration. Thus, after the full-time position was eliminated for a year, Sara Kelly Johns's part-time job was created, with a goal to develop this into a crucial, full-time position. Mrs. Johns felt that a suite of solid, dependable, readily accessible databases was critical, and ABC-CLIO Solutions databases were her first-priority resources for teaching students and for training teachers.
Challenge: Blended Learning

An "anytime, anywhere" blended education program must be fully integrated into daily teaching and the curriculum. This also supports New York State's mandate for blended learning. Integral to this is the need for a more defined professional development program.

SOLUTION

Johns's enthusiasm was such that her comment for this "challenge" was, "Here's the good stuff!"

She created the Teacher Corner, where she collaborated with teachers to develop projects and to train them on resources and technology tools within the context of those projects. Her position was driven by student project-based learning. No project launches in the classrooms without her involvement. She collaborates with teachers to develop pathfinders. She then introduced students to the resources and explained why each was on the pathfinder. Within the suite of ABC-CLIO databases, she showed them why specific resources were "just for them—especially for that project" and best for the information they needed.

Mrs. Johns believes that "trust" plays a huge role in the use of ABC-CLIO databases. The teachers and staff trust the deep, authoritative, and relevant content that is updated continually. And when the teachers trust these resources, so do the students. They know that the information is accurate and represents the primary sources of information they need for their projects.

Challenge: Flexible Education Programs

A key goal for Lake Placid Central School District is to meet the needs of families who need a high-quality but flexible education program.

SOLUTION

The next steps for Lake Placid are to develop a more complete "anytime, anywhere" education program, including further use of the concept of the "embedded librarian." Through online lessons and pathfinders, students complete online independent studies with a liaison teacher and personalized library service. The district is working with the teachers' union to implement this shift in instruction.

Thus, Lake Placid is on the leading edge for developing an innovative approach for providing high-quality education designed to the future's more diverse student needs. These “long-tail students,” with specialized niche needs, may actually be a quickly growing segment of the population for individualized learning. This leading-edge strategy has the potential to reach more students, providing higher enrollment for the district and resulting in higher revenue during difficult economic times.
ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING AND ANALYSIS

Underlying this entire program is the key tenet of teaching critical thinking. Mrs. Johns used the guided inquiry process outlined in *Guided Inquiry: Learning in the 21st Century* by Carol Kuhlthau, Leslie Maniotes, and Ann Caspari (Libraries Unlimited, 2007), a model which really speaks to her.

Through lessons such as those detailed later in this study, ABC-CLIO Solutions teaches students to think critically. Mrs. Johns says, “It always takes students a minimum of 10 minutes of searching before they find there is a better way to find the right information.” She notes that “after awhile, they learn to just go directly to the ABC-CLIO databases. So, the students usually don’t start with this solution to their questions but they certainly end up there!” This is key to learning critical-thinking skills.

EVALUATING SUCCESSES

Mrs. Johns relates that near Christmas vacation, former students traditionally returned from college to visit with faculty. One year the consensus from several students was, “Thank goodness we knew about databases, because most of the students at college didn’t.” This validates our efforts toward the goal that students graduate from school ready for life—whether that be directly into the workforce or at university.

EXAMPLES OF ABC-CLIO SOLUTIONS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

CROSS-CURRICULAR SENIOR SOCIAL STUDIES ELECTIVE

In a cross-curricular senior social studies elective, students are assigned a project about World War II that combines AP English, literature and history. Students are exploring the issues raised in *Shadows Walking*, and they examine the impact on history. A key resource is ABC-CLIO Solutions for research on topics ranging from the Nuremberg trials to sterilization. Dr. Douglas Skopp, the author of *Shadows Walking* and a faculty member at SUNY Plattsburgh, works with them on this project.

Through this cross-curricular integration and collaboration, students learn how and why the book was written, what role research played in it, and its message. Some students cried when they listened to the author talk about it, showing the validity of this approach to teaching.

SEVENTH GRADE NATIVE AMERICAN PROJECT

Seventh graders are assigned a Native American project which explores the themes of geography and how it influenced Native Americans before the Europeans came. Even at this level, *The American Indian Experience* was extremely valuable, not only for researching where tribes lived but also for asking and understanding why they lived in a particular place.

Johns developed a pathfinder on a Wikispaces site which is then linked to the library homepage (see above). The seventh graders couldn’t use all of the database’s information, but they learned to skim to find what they really needed for the in-depth and higher order thinking skills questions.

FAMILY CAREER SCIENCE

Family and Career Science is an additional curriculum in which Lake Placid has turned to ABC-CLIO Solutions. *The Daily Life and Pop Culture* databases are especially valuable with the special topics and issues needed for these studies.
Quick Facts

Lake Placid Junior-Senior High School
• 370 students in grades 6–12
• 13 Olympians are graduates
• Offers AP, college prep, accelerated studies
• Offers small class size, state-of-the-art technology, and an abundance of extra-curricular opportunities
• Part of the Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES School Library System, Malone, NY

Primary Objective:
“In our district, nestled in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains and rich with Olympic heritage, students of all ages are able to pursue their athletic dreams while benefiting from a flexible, top-notch educational program. The LPCSD guidance staff makes every effort to create a viable working relationship. When the athletes are away from Lake Placid for competitions, the school provides a liaison teacher to help the students keep up with their studies.”

ABC-CLIO Databases Used:
• American History
• American Government
• World History: Ancient and Medieval Eras
• World History: The Modern Era
• Issues: Understanding Controversy and Society
• Daily Life through History
• Pop Culture Universe: Icons, Idols, Ideas
• The African American Experience: The American Mosaic
• The American Indian Experience: The American Mosaic
• The Latino American Experience: The American Mosaic
• World Geography: Understanding a Changing World
• United States Geography
• World at War: Understanding Conflict and Society
• World Religions: Belief, Culture, and Controversy

DISTRICT LEADER
Sara Kelly Johns
Former Instructor, Mansfield University School of Library and Information Technology and Former School Librarian, Lake Placid Junior-Senior School; American Association of School Librarians (AASL) School Librarian, American Library Association (ALA) Council Member, and New York Library Association (NYLA) Educational Leadership Committee Co-Chair