



Case Study

Technology Helps Turn Around Struggling Students in Florida School

Florida school taps Classworks to integrate benchmarks

- By [Bridget McCrea](#)
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When it comes to meeting standards and reaching benchmarks, Florida's elementary school teachers and administrators have a lot on their plates these days. Between the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests (FCAT), the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS), and various other subject-specific standards that must be met, the amount of data and information generated during a student's elementary school years can get overwhelming.

In its quest to find a fast, streamlined way to deal with the information overload, [Sand Lake Elementary School](#) in Orlando set out to find a technology solution that would meet the needs of its 500 students.

"Last year we were a new school looking for a system that would integrate the various educational benchmarks across grades K through 5," said Kelli Poster D'Amato, a reading coach at the Orange County School. Also prompting the search was the arrival of several Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) transfer students to the school. (As part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all public schools must meet certain goals to determine if the students are making adequate progress each year.)

"We were looking for something to reach our high-, medium-, and low-[achieving] students all in one shot," said D'Amato, who shopped around for a solution before selecting [Classworks](#), a network-based system of K-12 reading and mathematics courses and learning tools that comprise more than 5,000 hours of curriculum.

Developed by Duluth, GA-based Curriculum Advantage, Classworks correlates to national and state learning standards and state tests and includes prescriptive and summative assessment, remediation, and reporting tools. Sand Lake is also using the firm's Classworks Language Learner Series, which addresses English as a Second Language learning with content that focuses on auditory, visual, and tactile/kinesthetic components.



One of Classworks' interactive activities

D'Amato said Classworks came highly recommended by the other Orange County schools that were already using it. "We really felt that it would deliver the highest value, while meeting our needs for an across-the-board solution," she said. Implementation went smoothly, she added, although special attention was given to helping teachers make the necessary adjustments to the system to accommodate "different levels of students."

Sand Lake currently uses Classworks for all of its students and serves as the school's main computer program for both reading and math. Teachers establish daily computer rotation schedules, with each class visiting the computer lab twice a week for 30-minute sessions. Each student automatically receives an individualized learning path, based on his or her own "high-stakes" test scores.

Classworks units are based on state standards and offer interactive instruction through a multi-sensory approach that includes voice, pop-up text, audio support, video, photographs, artist drawings, and animated clips.

According to D'Amato, the program has been widely accepted by teachers and students and alike, and is yielding benefits after just one year of use. "Some of the most significant gains we've seen are with our AYP transfer students, who typically have limited access to technology in the home," D'Amato explained.

"Often these students are unmotivated and challenging to work with, but with the help of Classworks they enjoy reading and math activities," D'Amato continued, "and don't even realize that their success with it is due to the differentiated levels that the classroom teachers set for each student."

In addition, D'Amato said teachers enjoy sharing the score reports with the AYP students and helping them see how they're progressing in the different skills, and where improvement is needed.

The school's ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) population is also benefiting from the technology. "This group gets a kick not only out of the technology component that most students would like anyway," said D'Amato, "but their vocabulary and mastery of skills also steadily increase as they hear and see the components of the program."

Finally, the school's response to intervention (RTI) program now includes Classworks data, thus allowing for easier measurement of student growth. "This gives us a way to track and chart each student's progress," said D'Amato. "It challenges our high-level students, while allowing us to give additional support--outside of the computer program, via direct instruction--to our low-achieving students."

With its AYP, ESOL, and RTI populations benefiting from the technology, Sand Lake expects to expand its use of Classworks in the 2009-10 school year. "We had a lot of breakthroughs this past year and have found ways to incorporate the program to work smarter--and not harder--to better assist all learners," said D'Amato. "We'll continue to research, enhance, and integrate the technology into the classroom."

About the Author

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