

Competency-based Education Vista Unified School District - Creating Opportunities for Student Collaboration

How does your organization define competency-based education?

We are meeting children where they are and giving them the tools and resources that will allow them to master the standards and progress at a rate that will ensure they achieve mastery.

Currently our goal is to be a true one-to-one district where students can take their devices home. Right now we are not sending the computers home because of the Williams Act in California and some families do not have internet access.



Contributor

Name: Erin English

Emails: erinenglish@vistausd.org

URL

http://digitalpromise.org/cbe_resource/vista-unified-school-district-creating-opportunities-for-

Overview

We have implemented our COW projects (California, Ohio, Wisconsin) where middle school students in four teachers' classrooms work with four teachers in two different states to complete a project. The COW leaders wanted to see if they could develop a competency-based, interstate, interdisciplinary course focusing on a single topic.

Each district sent two teachers to the Mentor School District outside Cleveland to work on the project for three days in July 2015. Together, they developed curriculum around a singular guiding question: "How do people affect the land and how does the land affect people?" In July 2016, teachers from Mentor Public Schools and Vista Unified School District visited the Kettle Moraine School District in Wisconsin to celebrate what their accomplishments and to create plans for the 2016/17 school year. During the projects, students identified their standards and created learning experiences to show their learning.

This toolkit was developed through a partnership between



To learn more, visit digitalpromise.org/cbe

Beliefs

We believe that these projects have helped hold students accountable for their learning, and have helped students work on skills, knowledge and awareness to succeed in their careers or college.

Rationale

The availability of Open Education Resources (OER) was a key driver for our project. OER are licensed in such a way that educators can share, reuse, and adapt them to meet the needs of their students — a perfect vehicle for this project.

Outcomes

In addition to developing units of study tied to standards and finding appropriate resources for activities, the COW teachers designed the specifications of a project through which students would demonstrate their learning. The students had to come up with an idea of a project to demonstrate their learning, choose the ELA standards that they were going to address, and then create the project. It was difficult, because they had never even seen the standards before. Parents came to a showcase where student work was displayed and both they and students were extremely proud of the outcomes.

Surprises

When we let the kids decide and set their learning goals the outcomes exceeded our expectations because we did not put a cap on what they could do.

Considerations

There are many lessons to be learned for next time.

- We found that the students did not get into soft-skill standards enough. We plan to look more deeply at the ELA standards, especially collaboration, communication, and presentation skills – teaching those explicitly.
- Participating teachers are developing in-class and self-paced modules to support the students and exploring ways to increase the use of asynchronous collaboration despite time zone challenges and differences in technology access across districts. A few teachers struggled with the new approach, suggesting that they did not have as much contact with their students as they were used to. However, students were getting more face time with each other as they were off on their quests and turning to each other with questions instead of the teachers.
- Teachers had a hard time figuring out how well the students were learning, As a result, we will be designing more periodic check-ins to be sure that they know students are making progress.

Artifacts

- [Transparency in Technology: Vista Unified School District's Transition to Digital Learning](#) (Department of Education Feature)
- [The California–Ohio–Wisconsin \(COW\) Project](#) (ASCD Case Study)

This toolkit was developed through a partnership between



To learn more, visit digitalpromise.org/cbe