

Making Foreign Language Credit Possible

Challenge

Guthrie Common School District (GCSD) is located in the middle of the third-least-populated county in the United States. The district needed to find a solution that could offer students credits for either the two-year or three-year language requirement without the district having to acquire full-time teaching staff. Having approximately 100 students in the entire district, they sought a technology solution that would serve as the core instruction for Spanish. They looked to blend this technology with the virtual classroom to meet the requirements by the state of Texas to award credit for language courses. In addition, they sought a solution that would gain approval from the Texas Virtual School Network. With approval, the district could administrate and offer courses through its virtual platform, Guthrie Virtual School (GVS), to other small, neighboring school districts as well as provide instruction to students that wanted to accelerate their learning. The district also envisioned implementing a program that could leverage online access so that courses could not only serve other Texas districts and schools but also be expanded nationwide for districts facing budget cuts and looking for an affordable solution.

Implementation

In March 2011, GCSD developed Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 courses for students in grades 8–12 to gain high school credit. The courses embedded the Texas state standards and were approved by the Texas Virtual School Network. The Rosetta Stone® Classroom solution was used as the primary source for language acquisition in each course, focusing on developing conversational skills. Learners accessed online courses through GVS either during a designated class time at school or from home. With 50% of a student's grade assigned to progress made through the use of the Rosetta Stone program, learners were required to complete one unit in the Rosetta Stone program per six-week period. In order to gain credit for a GCSD Spanish course, one and a half levels of Rosetta Stone (a total of six units) had to be completed along with cultural projects, speaking and writing activities, and quizzes. At the end of each course, learners were required to take an exam created by a teacher of record to earn credit for the course.

Benefits

Through Rosetta Stone Classroom and its inductive learning process, the students were able to acquire language skills in Spanish Levels 1 and 2 and pass the language requirements of the State of Texas. The following benefits have been realized since March 2011, the start of their implementation:

- Ability to offer foreign language instruction for academic credit to schools lacking instructional resources
- Achieved a 94.6% student course pass rate
- Realized a 295% increase in active learners, with 350 learners outside district



At a Glance:

The Guthrie Virtual School (GVS) originates from the Guthrie Common School District in Guthrie, Texas, the county seat of King County. Though King County is the third-least-populated county in the United States, it is neither slim on talented folks nor short on vision. Recognizing the fundamental shifts that are occurring in education around the world, the folks at Guthrie determined not only to begin leveraging the vast world of educational opportunity for our own students, but to become a provider of exemplary education to other students all over Texas, and beyond. With scant resources but big ideas we began assembling a team of energetic and visionary professionals to launch ourselves into the global marketplace of online education. Our goal is to provide the very best in online learning, with our efforts focused primarily on small and rural school districts which are strapped for resources and have limited options for their students. Regardless of the location of our customers, we are committed to providing worldclass learning, with a hometown feel.

"At Guthrie Virtual School (GVS) we intend to optimize opportunity by both giving and receiving the best in LEARNING that the world has to offer. Rosetta Stone has joined with us to create a unique and powerful learning model."

—Dr. Nelson Coulter
**District Superintendent,
Guthrie Common School
District**

Partnering to build resources

In March 2011, GCSD was approved by the Texas Virtual School Network to offer Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 courses to grade 8–12 students through GVS. As Dr. Nelson Coulter, superintendent, states, "At Guthrie Common School District we chose to create our own virtual school through which we can serve not only our own students in this new world, but any student on the planet who would like to join us." The courses were developed using the Rosetta Stone® Classroom online solution as the primary source of instruction. Upon successful completion of a course, learners received credit towards the two- or three-year language requirement, depending on the program of study. Leveraging technology for success allowed learners to access GVS from anywhere, anytime, and at their own pace. GVS believes this flexibility is key to the success with the virtual classroom. "Any student, regardless of age, can learn about anything they choose. As well, facilitating learning is moving at warp speed toward personalization and customization," states Dr. Coulter.

Finding a solution with limited resources

GCSD sought to find a solution for small districts like themselves to leverage technology to meet language-learning requirements. Because there are between 500 and 600 schools in Texas with less than 200 students each, many districts cannot afford hiring full-time teaching staff to support their foreign language program. In addition, many districts find it difficult hiring these resources locally. With Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 courses now available on GVS, neighboring districts as well as districts

nationwide that have similar challenges have access to an affordable solution to meet instructional needs.

Growing the program

In addition to meeting language requirements during the school year, GVS realized that many parents were signing up their children for courses to accelerate their learning. By giving learners the ability to study over the summer or to take additional courses throughout an academic year, students received a head start to language learning. Also, GVS found significant growth in demand for its programs outside of targeted smaller districts in areas such as the metro area of Dallas. In 2012, GVS received approval from Texas Virtual School Network to offer Spanish 3 courses. GVS has estimated that future growth will come from the continued expansion of approved Spanish courses into new markets and locations as well as an increase in foreign language course offerings, such as French and Chinese, as dictated by market demand.

Realizing benefits

Since launching their program, GVS experienced increased enrollment and success. In the fall semester of 2011, 297 students enrolled in Spanish courses, earning an average pass rate of 94.6% and receiving credit for language courses. The overall total monthly hours in the Rosetta Stone solution increased 263% to over 800 hours in January 2012. In addition, GVS experienced a 295% increase in active learners in the program. This is mainly due to increased enrollment outside the district. The program grew statewide with over 350 learners enrolled outside of the district.

Developing a course for success

GCSD hired a Spanish lead teacher to create curriculum for each course that was aligned with Texas state standards. Using the Rosetta Stone solution as the core for language acquisition, the lead teacher developed customized tutorials, speaking and writing activities, and quizzes to supplement instruction. Each course was partitioned into six, six-week instructional periods in which learners completed one unit of the Rosetta Stone program per period. The tutorials were customized based on Rosetta Stone content. A facilitator

was assigned to ensure that learners were following the course timeline and completing assignments as outlined by the syllabus, which greatly helped to ensure learner success. As the lead Spanish teacher at GVS, Summer Real, stated, "I really think the Rosetta Stone program may provide more opportunities for students to practice speaking the language than they might have in a traditional classroom setting. I am so impressed by their pronunciation abilities. I have to attribute this to the Rosetta Stone program, since the program serves as the foundation of our online Spanish course." Teachers were amazed at how quickly learners built the confidence to communicate.

About Rosetta Stone

Rosetta Stone Inc. is the global leader in language-learning software. With 20 years of experience behind us, we're continuing to develop award-winning innovations that improve the lives of people and the operations of organizations every day.

Our proprietary, proven method leverages interactive technologies to replicate the immersion environment in which people learn their first language, and it activates each learner's natural aptitude for acquiring a new language regardless of language background.

We offer our clients scalable solutions for a variety of needs, from individual learners to single classrooms to entire organizations. Our solutions have been implemented in over 20,000 schools and in more than 17,000 private and public sector organizations, and they are used by millions of learners in over 150 countries throughout the world.



Education