

Mobile learning solution helps Inkster Public Schools turn wireless phones into valuable learning tool.

Sprint and GoKnow deliver higher achievement scores for underprivileged school district.



Inkster Public Schools is located just six miles southwest of Detroit, Michigan, in Wayne County. Inkster is one of the highest-needs areas in the State of Michigan, with 90% of students eligible for free/reduced lunches and more than one in five students (22%) are designated special education. The impact of poverty and learning disabilities on the school community and on life greatly shapes the educational experience for students and families.

Challenge

Inkster Public Schools, a school district just outside of Detroit, is located in one of the highest-needs areas in Michigan. More than one in five students require special education and learning disabilities were not uncommon. Data showed that students in the district were performing below state standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Inkster sought to improve students' test scores and increase their engagement in the classroom.



Inkster began investigating technology around mobile learning. The school district wanted to utilize a new learning solution that would create a one-to-one teaching environment between students and teachers, increasing engagement from students. Although wireless phones had been barred from the classroom for years, viewed as a disruption to the learning environment, Inkster decided to explore the possibility of using wireless phones as a learning tool.

Solution

Sprint introduced Inkster to GoKnow Learning, Inc., a University of Michigan spinoff that focuses on helping K-12 institutions adopt mobile learning. During the 2009 summer school session, Inkster implemented a trial program with Sprint and GoKnow. Sprint devices were loaded with the GoKnow software and integrated into the classroom. The school's curriculum, assignments and other learning materials were available to students on their devices. Students could download tasks, complete them on their phones and then upload completed tasks back to their teacher. They used a variety of mobile technology programs on their phones, including Pico map (creating family tree and characterization using graphic organizers), Sketchy (story telling using animation software), KWL chart (vocabulary skills and activating prior knowledge), camera, video and Windows Mobile (word processing).

The technology allowed students to complete many mobile learning assignments. Because of Sprint devices such as the HTC Touch Pro2, students could use advanced learning tools on the go. Students took a field trip to Comerica Park Baseball Stadium that integrated math concepts by using the seating arrangements at the park to determine which section of seating generated the most income. The students used their wireless phones to gather data using Windows Mobile (Excel®). The students also used their wireless phones to capture pictures of the park with the objective of creating a slideshow presentation of their experience.

Bottom line

The trial delivered results above and beyond the expectations of Inkster Public School District. Prior to the trial, students were performing below state standards in ELA and math. However, after this trial, participating students increased their achievement scores on average by 25 percent. Student attendance and engagement in the classroom also increased.

“We realize that students are digital learners with a firm grasp of technology, so integrating tools that they use everyday has provided some wonderful benefits,” said Pete Lopez, the IT Director of Inkster Public Schools. “The use of Sprint wireless phones combined with the strength of the Sprint Now Network™ and the GoKnow software has enabled us to create both a mobile learning environment and a paperless classroom with immediate feedback that the students responded very well to. An added benefit is that our Title-1 district status allows us to receive federal funding for the wireless phone service through E-Rate, a government funded program.”

With a successful trial completed, Inkster Public Schools is proposing plans to implement this technology in all middle and high schools for the 2010-11 school year. The first step was to discuss results at a school board meeting. The Inkster Public Schools board members, superintendent, community and stakeholders provided positive feedback regarding the wireless phone initiative. Inkster Public Schools is very pleased with this innovative new technology, transforming the traditionally disruptive wireless phone into a powerful learning tool.

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> HTC Touch Pro2



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