

Success Story

“BuildYourOwnCurriculum trains educators to the concepts of writing. I think what Hancock is doing with it is exemplary and far better than other examples I have seen!”

— Steve Williams
Consultant
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary
Education

Administrators at Hancock Place School District in St. Louis, Missouri, realize that the key to quality curriculum is in-depth discussion and collaboration, and that takes time. Realizing this, Assistant Superintendent Lisa Charles decided to add a technology tool to help them save time and develop curriculum to lead her district to success.

“BuildYourOwnCurriculum and BuildYourOwnAssessment have helped us organize our curriculum into units, within a given time-frame, in a user-friendly format,” said Charles. “In addition, we are in the process of developing quality quarterly assessments.”

BuildYourOwnCurriculum (BYOC) was specifically designed by educators to meet the needs of administrators and teachers. The easy-to-use format helps teachers develop curriculum based on state standards and learning targets they are required to teach.

“In Missouri, there is no set curriculum — there is no format or model to follow, so schools have to write their own,” said Steve Williams, a consultant with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Hancock Place was looking to improve the organization and alignment of

their curriculum. They had investigated multiple tools, and ultimately decided on BYOC to help get back on track.”

With BYOC, teachers can locate current curriculum requirements and resources, to easily update and customize their lesson plans in alignment with district standards and expectations. Administrators can gain instant access to the learning paths in each building, grade, and classroom — and view this information by standard, by teaching objective, and by key concept.

“Most teachers don’t have experience writing curriculum so I consult with them, making sure they align each activity to the intended learning targets,” said Williams. “BYOC trains them to the concepts of writing. There is a great amount of participation and teacher buy-in. Having ownership of what they are teaching in class holds educators accountable and encourages them to teach to standards.”

If you can turn on a computer, you can use BYOC. The program walks educators through the process step-by-step, and allows teachers to customize their plans, and then go back later to make any necessary adjustments.

“What happens a lot of time with curriculum is that once it is written, it’s difficult to monitor as to whether or not it is being implemented in the classroom,” said Charles.

“BYOC provides our administrators with knowledge of a particular curriculum unit to assist during classroom visits. This way the administrators are able to have valuable conversations with the teachers on instruction. What a great way to monitor curriculum implementation!”



build your own
curriculum
The Framework for K-12 Success

Hancock Place School District

Saint Louis, Missouri

• Enrollment (1,866 Students)

As teachers work to differentiate instruction, meet standards, complete reporting requirements, and address the unique needs of each learner, it's important to make curriculum a valuable guide, rather than another obstacle, to effective classroom practice. BYOC does exactly that by making current curriculum requirements and resources readily accessible and making it easy for teachers to update and customize their lesson plans in alignment with your district's standards and expectations

"Since there wasn't a need for hours of technical instruction, the professional development we have had with teachers has been centered on rich conversations about developing quality curriculum, not on how to use the tool," said Charles. "During the 2008-2009 school year, we were able to successfully develop a unit-based K-12 Communication Arts Curriculum."

Williams and Charles have both seen extremely positive teacher feedback on BYOC. Once Hancock teachers begin with BYOC, they get to work and there is very little "push back." It's so user-friendly that teachers easily work their way through and find it very beneficial almost immediately.

"At the end of every writing session, we do a teacher feedback survey, and because BYOC is so easy to use, these evaluations are consistently in the top two categories of agreement," said Williams. "I think what Hancock is doing with it is exemplary and far better than other examples I have seen!"

Hancock began using BuildYourOwnAssessment (BYOA) in the fall of 2009 and teachers started to develop a Communication Arts assessments aligned to the newly developed curriculum. They are also in the process of developing a K-12 Math curriculum with a new group of teachers. In 2010, the math writers began to develop assessments using the BYOA tool and the science team began developing curriculum using the BYOC tool.

"The reports have been tremendous and a wealth of information. At any given point, I am able to check for alignment, GLE's coverage, or just to look at the 'big

picture'," said Charles. "We are no longer tied to writing or reviewing curriculum on certain days. Since the tool is Internet-based, our teachers and administrators have access to the tool at home or at school."

Whether administrators are preparing for classroom observations, a school board meeting, or a parent advisory event, BYOC gives instant access to the learning paths in each building, grade and classroom. Building principals, as instructional leaders, will have access to the information they need to help shape curriculum.

"Another great benefit to BYOC is that technical support the district has received has been top-notch. There is immediate feedback and the support team is prompt to make suggested changes," said Charles. "They have also provided in-district and web-based professional development on as-needed basis."

Williams agrees, "One of the neat things about BYOC is that if we had any problems or issues, we could make a phone call and there was an immediate and effective solution. They created an application, fixed a problem — whatever we needed." "I highly recommend both the BYOC and BYOA tool to any district who may be in the process of developing or revising curriculum" said Charles. "From the service you receive, to the professional development that is provided, to the tool itself — BYOC has it all."

School Software Group

School Software Group (SSG) is an online solution provider of district curriculum and assessment management systems. At SSG, we believe that a well-articulated and viable curriculum ensures standards-aligned, rigorous, and effective classroom instruction. We create the tools to systematically document a district's curriculum—turning it into a viable, living document that can be easily improved.