

Success Story

Implementing With A Purpose

When West De Pere, a school district in northeastern Wisconsin, learned their current curriculum management system was no longer going to be offered, they began the task of finding another. The curriculum staff at West De Pere was concerned about the time needed to move and restructure their curriculum with so many initiatives already in progress: Student Learning Objectives, Common Core implementation, the Danielson Framework, and many more. As Amy LaPierre, Curriculum Director at West De Pere, began the search, she quickly became interested in BuildYourOwnCurriculum (BYOC). Published by School Software Group, BYOC was the suggested replacement for their old curriculum management system and LaPierre and her staff were drawn to it both because of “positive recommendations from other schools” and because of its “instructional design and ease of use.”

Intentional Implementation

Despite their enthusiasm about their new curriculum management system, the curriculum staff at West De Pere decided to be intentional about how they introduced the product to their staff and how they implemented it. After converting from their old system to BYOC, LaPierre decided to have two or three departments work on curriculum a year. This meant a long implementation process for the district, approximately four or five years. However, the goal was to keep teachers interested and engaged with the product by allowing the teachers plenty of time to learn and work in the system. “We really wanted this to be supported,” explained LaPierre. “We are doing a few departments at a time so we know that we are supporting

the system as the teachers are first using it, rather than just adding it to the plate and expecting them to be successful with it.”

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— Amy LaPierre,
Curriculum Director, West De Pere School District

Now after their first year of implementation, LaPierre and her staff are extremely happy with how their process is working. The first departments to implement BYOC were Mathematics and Physical Education. According to LaPierre, “Our implementation strategy is making the task more manageable.” She continued, “I think with anything new there has to be the professional development and support piece—if we are going to expect the teachers to be successful. And I think we have been successful because we are focusing on a few departments at a time.” The teachers who have been trained in BYOC thus far, approximately 35, are also happy with the product. “They are surprised at how easy and intuitive the software is. They also appreciated the collaboration piece where they can see other districts’ curriculum,” said LaPierre. West De Pere is using the search portion of BYOC, which allows a district to look at other BYOC districts both locally and around the country, to give their teachers a starting point. “It helps our teachers see the target and gets them started when they are hesitant to begin,” explained LaPierre.



build your own
curriculum
The Framework for K-12 Success

West De Pere School District

West De Pere, Wisconsin

- Enrollment (3,078 Students)
- Five Buildings

Added Benefits

As part of their implementation strategy, West De Pere is focusing on increasing conversations about curriculum between curriculum staff and teachers, between teachers of the same class, and between teachers of different classes and different grades. According to LaPierre, “BYOC lends itself to a lot of good conversation among the departments about effective curriculum planning, unit design, assessment, and instructional pedagogy as they work on curriculum.” In an effort to reduce repetition and improve the vertical flow within their curriculum, the staff at West De Pere had all K-5 teachers gather for a large group collaboration meeting, and also all 6-12 teachers gather to collaborate. As a district, they are maximizing BYOC’s ability to create consistent, manageable curriculum across grades and schools.

Another benefit West De Pere has taken advantage of is the partnership between School Software Group and the Common Core Institute (CCI). This partnership allows a district that uses BYOC to purchase the Common Core State Standards deconstructed into learning targets from CCI. Then the learning targets are imported into BYOC, saving a district both time and energy. Instead of having to write their own learning targets and align them to standards, the process is already done for them. According to the staff at West De Pere, “being able to purchase the Common Core Institute Learning Targets has been valuable in the mapping process.”

West De Pere has also enjoyed the excellent customer service provided by the staff at School Software Group. “Throughout the implementation process we have been able to work effectively with the software programmers to resolve any issues that came up during implementation,” commented LaPierre. According to Dorian Bennett, West De Pere’s Curriculum Administrative Assistant, “The support has been very responsive, quick to get back to us when we have had an issue or a question, and easy to work with.” Often when a district purchases a piece of software they are left on their own to figure it out and troubleshoot any issues

that arise, but with BYOC and School Software Group, the programmers and support staff are always available to help a district.

Looking Ahead

As West De Pere looks forward to the end of their implementation process, they want to “have guaranteed and viable curriculum for all subject areas mapped and organized in one place.” Although the teachers and staff at West De Pere are the ones writing and designing the curriculum, it is the insightful and practical design of BYOC that will allow the district’s goal to become a reality. BYOC enables a district to work collaboratively on curriculum that is both easy to use in the classroom day-to-day and is easy to update and regularly improve. “We really want our curriculum to be a framework for teachers and to provide consistency in what is delivered to our students regardless of the teacher they have,” said LaPierre. The goal is that unlike the old ways of managing curriculum that were cumbersome and not always practical for the classroom, West De Pere’s curriculum in BYOC can be something valuable and useful for the teachers day in and day out. “We also want it to help new teachers,” explained LaPierre. “It is something that we can give to incoming teachers to serve as a starting point so they know what is expected of them and they aren’t left without guidance.”

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.