

Active Learning

Closing the Achievement Gap with ēno

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UPPER DARBY SCHOOL DISTRICT, DREXEL HILL, AP

Located just west of Philadelphia, Upper Darby School District serves one of the most densely populated and urbanized townships in Pennsylvania. Over the past two decades, the district has grown from 7,500 to over 12,000 students, making it the largest school system in Delaware County and among the top 11 in the state. The District is comprised of 14 schools, including one high school, two middle schools, ten elementary schools and a kindergarten center.

The Upper Darby School District's mission is to provide a comprehensive and challenging educational program that encourages all learners to respect others, value education and appreciate and contribute to their community as confident, independent thinkers. Despite the many funding and growth challenges the district faces, Upper Darby's strengths are numerous. An exceptionally dedicated faculty, including the 2006 PA Teacher of the Year and three PA Teacher of the Year finalists, works diligently with School Board members, teachers, support staff and parents to ensure success for all students.

THE CHALLENGE

As enrollment has increased, the educational and socioeconomic needs of Upper Darby students have grown in complexity and severity. Almost 50 percent of district students meet the low-income standard set by the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, six schools receive Title I school-wide services and Upper Darby students represent an increasingly diverse population. The district educates over 750 immigrants and refugees who are English Language Learners, making literacy a district-wide initiative.

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KATHY BLAIR | Instructional Technology Coach – Upper Darby High School

To address the needs of their diverse, growing student population, over the past five years, the Upper Darby School District designed a system of programs aimed at improving student achievement, ensuring safe schools and addressing school capacity issues. In their ongoing efforts to meet or exceed state core curriculum goals, they set forth a plan of strategies including the use of assessment data to drive instruction, adoption of standards-aligned core curricula and expanded integration and use of education technology.

With a lack of funding and limited staff resources, Upper Darby was faced with the challenge of finding the right technology to meet these lofty academic goals.

THE SOLUTION

The district began to evaluate interactive technology solutions that would allow teachers to deliver core curriculum through personalized lessons that cater to the needs of all learners. Since Upper Darby's classrooms are comprised of students who speak multiple languages and learn at different paces, finding an adaptable interactive solution that would encourage differentiated instruction was essential.

Upper Darby High School Instructional Technology Coach, Kathy Blair, was impressed by the intuitive functionality of Steelcase's [ēno interactive solutions](#) and the easy-to-use lesson development software included with the interactive whiteboard. "ēno empowers teachers to create personalized lessons and resources from scratch, and provides access to a library of curriculum-focused elements customizable to students' needs. All of our content is correlated to state standards, enabling teachers to successfully match objectives within key subject areas." Kathy says, "The ability to customize lessons is a key feature to help teachers connect with an entire class of different types of learners at one time."

Because Upper Darby is faced with limited funding and resources, David Peterkin, District Media Services Coordinator, explained that the staff also focused on finding a solution that was cost-efficient and easy to install. They learned that ēno requires no cables or wires and the technology is driver-based. ēno's Bluetooth® enabled stylus would make installation effortless. From a durability perspective, ēno's Forever Warranty™ ensures the board's e3 environmental ceramicsteel™ surface will last a lifetime. ēno offered a low total cost of ownership and simple installation—two features that make a considerable impact on districts with limited resources.

Through a combination of federal, state and foundation grants, Upper Darby equipped each of the district's fourteen schools with Steelcase interactive whiteboards. ēno click interactive whiteboards were implemented in Upper Darby's Freshman Academy, a program that is focused on effectively transitioning students from middle to high school and increasing the graduation rate. In addition, Steelcase donated several height-adjustable ēno one solutions to Upper Darby's elementary schools.



Implementing Steelcase technology has dramatically increased the level of engagement in my classroom. Students who used to shy away from contributing are now literally lining up to participate!

Steve Voelker, 9th grade Science Teacher – Upper Darby High School

THE BENEFITS

Purchasing technology is only half of the battle for districts. It is essential that teachers learn best practices for integrating interactive whiteboards into lessons to most effectively impact student achievement. Due to time and budget constraints, planning for professional development was a challenge for Upper Darby. David explains how Steelcase helped his district implement training; “Steelcase was very responsive when we reached out for technical support and for professional development. They graciously coordinated on-site technical and instructional workshops led by well-prepared and qualified Educational Consultants. Tech support is always willing to lend a hand to quickly resolve issues. Steelcase is a true partner who cares and equips us with the tools we need to bring teaching and learning success to our district.”

Teachers in the district are excited about ēno's immediate positive impact in classrooms. By leveraging personalized lessons, teachers are connecting to their diverse learners at one time. Nancy Mount, a first grade teacher at Primos Elementary School, says, “Since I began teaching with ēno, my students' enthusiasm has dramatically improved. They express their love for ēno on a daily basis. Students react to the interactive lessons as though they are games and offer encouragement to each other as they progress. I hear them supporting their classmates with phrases such as, ‘Good try!’ ‘Great game!’ ‘Keep trying’ or ‘You can do it!’” She continues, “As typical first graders, my students have trouble staying in their seats during regular lessons because they are easily distracted. But, when ēno is in use, they become focused as they patiently wait for their turn at the board.”

Steve Voelker, a ninth grade Science teacher at Upper Darby High School, says, “Implementing Steelcase technology has dramatically increased the level of engagement in my classroom. Students who used to shy away from contributing are now literally lining up to participate! When someone is at the ēno board, I can be sure all eyes in the class are focused on what we are doing.” Sheila Krusen, a third grade teacher at Hillcrest Elementary School, adds, “A worksheet and a textbook no longer suffice for my students. Their expectations for engaging lesson content have grown exponentially. As a result, my proficiency for interactively delivering concepts has quickly developed. During a lesson, students will ask to see a visual or use the Internet to build upon their background knowledge.”

“As a teacher, I cannot ever imagine going back to chalk again. I am teaching on a tool designed to educate in a style the children of the 21st century have come to expect.”

SHEILA KRUSEN 3RD GRADE TEACHER | Hillcrest Elementary School

Upper Darby is a district on the brink of greatness. Despite funding, overcrowding and resource setbacks, the district is triumphing with the support of Steelcase’s interactive solutions. With student and teacher engagement on the rise, attaining higher achievement is no longer a lofty goal, but a reality within close reach.

STEELCASE PRODUCTS

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