

How one district elevated its new homegrown curriculum with classroom-ready Custom Collections

THE CHALLENGE:

Improve literacy and reading skills for students across the district

Conway Public Schools had done everything right. They knew they needed to make changes to their curriculum to address their student needs and get more of them reading at or above grade level. Based on feedback from teachers and training they received from the state (Arkansas), they identified a need to shore up their grammar instruction to get their students back on track. Conway adopted a new curriculum that shifted from theme- and novel-based instruction to skill-based, and used Notice and Note signposts with a large focus on morphology and grammar in daily instruction. District curriculum leaders then invested in professional development to help teachers get the training they needed to implement the new framework. However, once everything was said and done, they realized they lacked the content to truly bring these curricular shifts to life in the classroom. Paula Harris, the Secondary Curriculum Coordinator at Conway explained, "And so we got the Notice and Note books, we got the training, we found a vertically aligned curriculum for vocabulary, we had our grammar triage, and then we thought, 'Wow, what do we do now?'"



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THE PLAN:

Find a resource that can help bring Conway's framework to life in the classroom

Conway needed to provide teachers with classroom content that was aligned to their revised skills-based ELA curriculum and that embedded the pedagogical practices they wanted to see in the classroom. Teachers at Conway had already been using Newsela content for their instruction, so when they heard about Newsela's ability to create a custom content resource starting with their specific needs, they knew it might be the fit they needed. After speaking with Newsela's team, Harris was surprised at how open and helpful they were. "We set up a call and they said, 'Well, what do you need?'" Which is not something you hear from a vendor very often; so, we shared the documents and materials we had, and they came back and said, 'I think we can really help you put all of this together in a way that flows and is seamless and manageable.'"

That's where the partnership began. Newsela worked closely with the Literacy Instructional Facilitators and Elementary and Secondary Curriculum Coordinators at Conway to curate content around Notice and Note signposts, morphology, and grammar. "We were just so grateful to find short pieces that could highlight our word study, pull out grammar and embed writing practices with, and then on top of that, have someone there to put it all together," said Harris. The next step was to roll it out to their teachers.

THE IMPLEMENTATION:

Create fidelity and accountability with Newsela

Once the Collection was completed, Conway decided to reveal the new resource at each campus to take the time to address all of the teachers' feedback. K.K Bradshaw, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at Conway expressed the district's concerns for introducing a new resource. "We anticipated having to pry novels out of English teachers' hands, but when we revealed Newsela and the platform to all 5-12 teachers, they were amazed. They were asking, 'How can this be true?'"

Conway district leadership has worked closely with building level administrators to train alongside teachers and make sure everyone understands Newsela. They also have a plan to ensure fidelity and accountability in bringing Newsela into the classroom at every grade level. Harris explains the Conway team's dedication to improving student literacy, and how Newsela's customized content has helped them get there. "We were constantly communicating in order to bring a true curriculum that's customized to our students' needs and our teachers' needs. We're just so excited to have Newsela help us do that."



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Conway Public Schools

~10,000

School Population

Little Rock, AR

Location

Design a Custom Resource with Newsela Content

We work with you to capture your vision. Our step-by-step process ensures we will leave you with a Collection that fits your needs.



Discovery

We meet with you to understand your goals, priorities, and vision



Curriculum Review

We review your goals and scope and sequence documents



Pilot

We build a proof of concept for your teachers to pilot and then refine it based on your feedback. From there, we build your entire Custom Collection



Delivery

We schedule training and delivery for your district to make certain your teachers and students are set up for success with your Custom Collection