

How one district partnered with Newsela to meet their state's new standards

DISTRICT PROFILE

Elmhurst School District
CHICAGO, IL

Student Population
~8,000

Technology Access
1:1



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Deborah Lee
DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM
AT ELMHURST

THE CHALLENGE

Find the right partner to help adopt changing social studies standards

In January of 2016 Illinois announced updates to its social studies learning standards for the 2017-2018 school year. Elmhurst Community Unit School District #205 had not gone through an adoption cycle since 2012 and district leaders knew their instructional resources were in need of an update. However, when they began



evaluating publishers to help meet the new curricular needs, they were disappointed to see how challenging it would be to find standards aligned solutions across social studies topics and grade levels. Deborah Lee, the Director of Curriculum at Elmhurst explained, “There would be no way I could go to our board and say I need to purchase a textbook in four content areas for every grade level.”

THE SOLUTION

A partnership between Newsela and teachers across the district

Having recently become a 1:1 district, Elmhurst was looking for ways to bring their curriculum online and leverage their students' access to technology. The district was considering Newsela, and was excited that the content was dynamic and spanned

across multiple subjects and reading levels. “The fact that the content would change in response to not only our teachers, but also our students - and that you could bring the past to the present, and vice versa - that’s what really won us over.” said Lee.

Traditional textbooks are designed chronologically, but in Elmhurst’s case, curriculum leaders wanted to backwards design their instruction so that students could more easily make sense of today while learning about the past. With Newsela, Elmhurst was able to build a resource that aligned to their inverted scope and sequence, which lent itself towards inquiry-based instruction.

Over the course of six weeks, Newsela partnered with teacher teams from across the district to unpack the vision the district had for its scope and sequence and select Newsela content that would engage students and meet the new state standards.



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WHAT’S NEXT?

A smooth implementation thanks to participation and buy-in from teachers

By including teachers in such a collaborative and customized process, Elmhurst leaders feel confident that their new resource will be used. Teachers across the district are enthusiastic about adopting the Newsela Collection into their daily instruction. Lee explains, “Working together to create a curricular resource was the key part in getting the buy-in from teachers. They really saw the reason for shifting instruction and understood how to utilize Newsela in their classrooms.”

What’s more, the old elementary, middle, and high school curricula were designed independently from one another. With the new resource, Elmhurst has been to seamlessly connect the three grade bands. They decided to move their U.S. History curriculum to 6th grade, a natural segue after students learn about colonization and exploration in 5th grade, and have also shifted their 8th grade curriculum to have



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a stronger emphasis on global themes so students will be prepared for Human Geography curriculum come 9th grade. By partnering with Newsela, Elmhurst has been able to create a customized and flexible resource that vertically aligns their K-12 curriculum and provides a more fluid experience as students move through grades.

Expect more from your social studies content



ACCESSIBLE TO ALL LEARNERS

Automatic differentiation so content is accessible regardless of reading level. Every student can access the lesson and participate in the same discussion.



CONSTANTLY UPDATED

Connect today's events to history and other disciplines with content dynamic enough to adopt in real time and that helps learners think critically about the world they live in.



AUTHENTIC AND RELEVANT

Content for the classroom that comes from the real world with diverse perspectives that help show students why history and civics matter to their lives.



ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

Engaging and timely materials that are aligned to standards and frameworks to also serve instructional goals at the same time.



Go to newsela.com to learn how you can enhance your social studies curriculum materials today!