

How one district created a customized resource to meet their states' new standards

THE CHALLENGE:

Find the right partner to help adopt changing 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."



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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 liked that the content was dynamic and spanned across multiple subjects and reading levels; but what excited them most was Newsela's ability to create a customized resource. "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.

WHAT'S NEXT:

Have teachers collaborate with Newsela to create a customized resource they helped design themselves

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 able 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 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.



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Elmhurst School District Stats:



~8,000

School Population

Chicago, IL

Location

1:1

Technology Access

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