



Creating Technology to Promote Learning

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"Planning For Progress"

Sahuarita Unified School District

TUCSON, AZ/October 15, 2007/ The Sahuarita Unified School District #30 has long been serving students in southern Arizona. In recent years, the school has been challenged to meet the educational needs of their growing student population. As part of this challenge, Sahuarita educators decided to use the Galileo K-12 Online Educational Management System, developed by Assessment Technology, Incorporated (ATI), to monitor the progress of the students and to guide instructional intervention. This is the story of how Sahuarita used Galileo as part of a plan for progress, informing instruction and improving education.

District Beginnings

As a rural school district south of Tucson and just 55 miles north of Mexico, the boundaries of the Sahuarita Unified School District have been steadily increasing over the last century. As early as 1948, the Sahuarita Unified School District approximately doubled its size to 108 square miles when it annexed Twin Buttes School District #21. By 1970, the size of the district had grown to its current boundaries of 607 square miles. Although the physical size of the district has not increased since then, the population has continued to grow. In four years, enrollment in the district has nearly doubled, from 2244 in the 2002-2003 school year to 4170 in the 2006-2007 school year. The district expects those numbers to more than double again, to about 9800 students by 2015.

District Needs

As a growing school district, the immediate need for classroom space was apparent. In January 2007, Anza Trail School opened its doors to over 800 students in Kindergarten through 6th grade, and in August the school was officially dedicated, serving 1217 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. Plans for other new schools include two new K-8 schools and two more high schools, including one high school serving approximately 750 students set to open in 2009.

While the district team was addressing its needs for more space, they also identified the need to implement an educational management system to monitor student progress. The need to streamline all of the school's efforts and maintain a total quality focus with consistent practice was Sahuarita's next step in achieving success.

A review of the market yielded many assessment systems, but not all of them would meet Sahuarita's goals. They wanted a cost-effective, reliable, and serviceable educational management system. They required a system that would provide assessment items aligned to Arizona grade-articulated standards, data for decision making, and flexible reporting capabilities that could be used by all district stakeholders to inform instructional decision-making, related to instruction, intervention, and enrichment.

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Choosing an Educational Management System

The Sahuarita district team did their homework in determining the best assessment tool for their needs. They reviewed their district-wide plan, to ensure consistent expectation for all schools. They examined systematic curriculum mapping to determine the district's "power standards." They also looked at formal structures for data analysis and program implementation based on the identification of needs, and examined the system's utility to help with stakeholder communication and collaboration. When all of their homework was complete, they decided to use Galileo K-12 Online.

Manny Valenzuela, the Assistant Superintendent for the Sahuarita Unified School District, stated "The Galileo K-12 Online educational management system provided by Assessment Technology Incorporated was selected because it is scientifically valid, flexible, standards-aligned, and formatted like the state assessments in many ways." Using Galileo, the district can regularly gather valid and actionable data from standards-aligned assessments and efficiently monitor individual student progress and mastery of standards. The district can also measure mastery of standards at the class, school, and district level. Galileo serves as an efficient tool to create the district's assessment plan. An additional advantage of Galileo K-12 Online is that it is accessed at the ATI servers via the internet, allowing the district to save valuable computer storage space and IT staff time.

Implementation: Building the Technology Infrastructure

To prepare for implementation, the district had multiple meetings with Assessment Technology representatives in order to ensure system compatibility with the district's various systems including the district's student information system. Training was also set up for the district's administrative and data management teams. This customized training focused on the essentials of effective benchmark assessment and use of reports and it enhanced the district's efforts to formally use data structures to guide instructional planning and targeted intervention efforts.

Sahuarita recognized the importance of gathering assessment data related to the district's curriculum, so another step in preparing for implementation of Galileo was the development of benchmark assessments. A benchmark assessment is a locally customized, district-wide assessment designed to measure the achievement of standards for the purpose of providing information that can be used to guide instruction. When developing a benchmark assessment, the learning standards and performance objectives that the tool will measure must first be identified. These standards are generally specified at the state level, however, local standards may also be included. Through the use of Galileo K-12 Online's Benchmark Planner and collaboration with the ATI's District Assessment Services staff, Sahuarita developed assessments to be used on a quarterly basis to inform instruction.

The Process: How Teachers Are Using Galileo K-12 Online

Galileo has, as of this writing, been in use for two years in Sahuarita. Teachers are following a plan for progress which includes a continuous cycle of instruction, assessment, and intervention that integrates benchmark and statewide assessment data. Data integration of this type provides a continuously increasing body of information about student mastery of standards. The data obtained using Galileo are utilized to:

- guide group instructional practice;
- support educational program adjustments;
- support individual student intervention and enrichment activities;
- inform standards-based lesson planning;
- improve district-wide curriculum planning;
- support programmatic accountability;
- reinforce student strengths and identify student needs.

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Sahuarita's plan for success includes the collection of demographic data, which enables educators to better understand student assessment results in the context of variables that might impact learning. "Data can be an invaluable tool to guide teacher practice, program development, and student support," says Assistant Superintendent, Manny Valenzuela. Sahuarita has implemented Galileo to provide standards-based assessment allowing educators to compile reports that aggregate and disaggregate student outcome data in ways that can inform instructional decision-making. Other data sources utilized in Sahuarita include state standard tests and classroom progress testing.

Benchmark Assessments Aligned To State Standards

In the past two years, Galileo benchmark assessments have become an integral part of the Sahuarita assessment-instructional cycle, with instruction and formative assessments being implemented based on the information provided by the benchmarks. The benchmark assessments measure student mastery of standards targeted for instruction. They not only indicate which areas students have mastered when given learning opportunities, but also which standards have not been mastered even though learning opportunities may have been provided. Valenzuela states "the data tells us which areas that we've taught have been mastered to a significant level. Then, we can make adjustments in reteaching areas that need more reinforcement or, perhaps, we can adjust the sequence of instruction based upon data." Formal data use has ensured that teachers can closely monitor student learning and quickly adjust their teaching based upon valid, empirical sources.

Benchmark assessment provides information to guide instruction in a cyclical fashion. In some cases, initial instruction is preceded by a pre-test designed to provide an overall picture of initial student mastery of standards. Initial instruction is followed by a benchmark assessment designed to assess mastery of standards and performance objectives covered during the initial instructional period. Teachers and administrators may use the results of the assessment to plan and implement interventions to address areas in which students may not have displayed mastery of standards and performance objectives measured on the benchmarks.

Educators set yearly individual and school goals based on review of the data. Throughout the school year, Galileo makes it possible for teachers to have immediate feedback on student progress. By having the assessment data readily available, teachers are empowered to adjust their curriculum mapping so that every student is given the best opportunity to succeed. Teachers can learn whether more time for specific skills is needed, adjust the sequence of learning objectives, or alter their methodologies. Galileo K-12 Online makes this possible with its flexible and dynamic reporting capabilities. It has allowed teachers to methodically ensure that every student has had every opportunity not just to be taught, but to demonstrate that he or she has mastered the skills.

In Sahuarita, the cycle of teaching, assessment, and intervention will be implemented four times during the school year. Repetitions of the cycle provide an increasing body of information about student learning. This information, coupled with information on statewide test performance, provides the opportunity for a multi-test approach to the assessment of standards mastery.

Using Galileo's Reporting Tools

Galileo K-12 Online provides many reports that educators can choose from to fit their needs. One that was chosen by Sahuarita educators is the *Class Development Profile Grid*. They use this report in two major ways. First, the report allows teachers to identify those "horizontal skills" where a critical number of students are struggling to master the skill. If the skill has already been formally taught and students have not attained mastery, then re-teaching followed by supplemental instruction and spiraled review are built into the curriculum map.

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Second, the report details allow the educator insights into those individual students with the greatest academic needs and specific areas in need of improvement. This class level data is used by teachers to develop formalized individualized plans for students and to provide supplemental instruction to address student needs and reinforce student strengths.

Sample Class Development Profile Grid Report

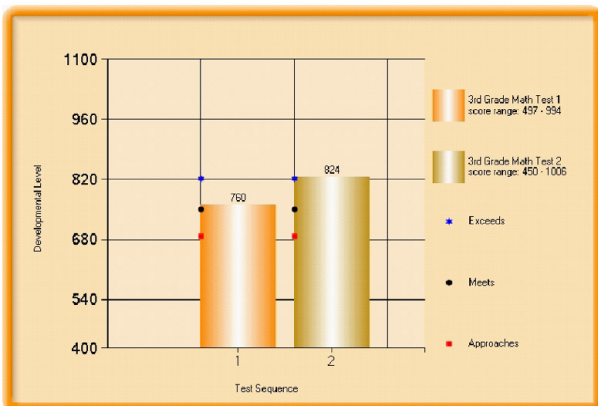
Class Development Profile Grid Report					
Class	Barbara Smith's 3rd Grade Class				
Test	3rd Grade Math Test 1				
MS	Meets Standard				
AS	Approaches Standard				
FS	Falls Below Standard				
	Fonseca, Mike	Georgi, Semesha	Gonzales, Joseph	Hill, Brandon	Wood, Timothy
Standards					
O 1. Read whole numbers in contextual situations (through six-digit numbers).	AS	AS	MS	MS	MS
O 6. Apply expanded notation to model place value. (e.g., 63,495 = 200,000 + 3,000 + 400 + 90 + 5) (From Gr.4-PO 6)	AS	FS	FS	MS	MS
O 4. State place values for whole numbers. (e.g., in the number 203,495 what is the value of the 2?) (From Gr.4-PO 4).	MS	FS	FS	AS	MS
O 7. Compare two whole numbers. (From Gr.4-PO 7)	FS	FS	MS	FS	MS
O 8. Order three or more whole numbers. (From Gr.4-PO 8)	MS	MS	MS	FS	MS
O 2. Add two three-digit whole numbers.	FS	MS	MS	AS	MS

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Another report used in Sahuarita is the new *Student Assessment History Report*. This report tracks student performance on statewide, benchmark, and formative assessments within and across school years through one cumulative online record. This report also yields a developmental level score that is correlated with performance on AIMS (Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards) – a state-mandated test). These developmental level scores have become the foundation of Sahuarita’s District Assessment Plan. For example, Sahuarita Middle School uses the benchmark assessment results to help inform the implementation of student programs on a computer-based individualized tutorial program. It is also used at the beginning of the school year to provide teachers with a snapshot of the past achievements of incoming students.

The *Aggregate Multi-Test Report* is another report used by educators in Sahuarita. This report shows the progress made by students in meeting benchmark goals across multiple assessments. It provides both a summary of the class as a whole, and details on the individual students. It is used to target instruction toward specific standards.

Sample Aggregate Multi-Test Report



Barbara Smith's 3rd Grade Class

Student	3rd Grade Math Test 1	3rd Grade Math Test 2	Performance Levels
Ariel, Hannah	821	777	Exceeds
Brennan, Michael	821	873	Meets
Brown, Samuel	788	852	Approaches
Crowning, Marcus	821	795	Falls Far Below
Delaney, Delia	788	873	Falls Far Below

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Real-time information through reports like those described above help guide staff development and identify individual students who need additional assistance to attain standards mastery. Through Galileo's tools, Sahuarita is better able to efficiently utilize its resources and focus them on developing plans to assist students.

The Progress So Far

So, has the Sahuarita Unified School District been able to meet the educational needs of their growing population? At the very least, they are on the right track. In the 2006-2007 school year, they were one of only two school districts in southern Arizona to have all of their schools meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) standards. Educators there plan to continue innovating, and to use the tools in Galileo K-12 Online to assess the effectiveness of the programs they use. Assistant Superintendent Manny Valenzuela says, "We can't create programs fast enough to meet the educational needs of our students." ATI's innovative tools will continue to grow in order to assist Sahuarita educators as they implement new processes and programs in the future.

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Assistant Superintendent Manny Valenzuela says, "Sahuarita's programs will help create a district of excellence, rather than pockets of excellence."

"The most obvious impediment to a results orientation is the failure to put data in front of teachers, have them look at it and then generate a manageable number of measurable goals based on the previous year's goals. This should be job one for administrators," says Michael Schmoker, Educational Writer and Consultant.

Side story: Data Assignments for Teachers

Sahuarita educators are implementing regularly scheduled meetings where faculty can focus on systematic collaboration and problem-solving as it relates to formal data analysis.

Data analysis has become part of Sahuarita's culture and language. District educators designate a time each week to collaborate and analyze data. Teachers receive a district directed assignment related to student assessment data each week for discussion during weekly department and grade level meetings. For example, teachers might be given the following assignment. "Identify three weak strands based on the Galileo K-12 Online Item Analysis Report. Identify two modifications on your curriculum map to address those areas." Teachers review the data and submit their responses via email to their building principal.

This data analysis exercise allows teachers to gain and enhance their analytical skills as they build their action plans for student progress. Teachers view class data from Galileo K-12 Online in order to theorize possible explanations and correlations for areas where the data suggests an area of concern. More importantly, teachers are able to use data to identify issues, propose solutions, and use the data to provide evidence and follow up.

Side story: Targeted Assistance Plans for Students

One practice used in Sahuarita is targeted assistance for students. Assessment results are used to identify students who could benefit from intervention, and a targeted assistance plan is developed. Students are offered a variety of assistance, including extra help at lunch, classes that focus on skills needed to pass AIMS, computer tutoring, and one-on-one as well as small group instruction. For example, an all-volunteer program called "Catch Up Literacy" pairs trained volunteers with small groups of students with similar needs for individualized instruction.