CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY:

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS | VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

PROACTIVELY CONQUERING THE DIGITAL WILD WEST

4 Key Data Strategies Senior Leaders at Virginia Beach Implemented to Improve Instruction, Cut Costs, and Effectively Track the ROI on Their 1:1 Investments.

Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) began deploying its one-to-one (1:1) initiative five years ago. The district's instructional and technology teams worked closely together to ensure teachers had the support and professional development required to ensure the initiative was a success. Now that the district has successfully made the digital leap, VBCPS leaders are asking themselves what's next in terms of leveraging their online learning tools, devices, and data to further impact and enhance learning.

As VBCPS has discovered, technology can unlock an infinite number of opportunities for students, but it can also turn learning environments into the digital Wild West, where teachers and students can venture into new, uncharted territories and access tools and apps that may not be effective or aligned to the district's curriculum or student data privacy policies.

To address this issue, David Din, the district's Director of Technology and acting CIO, and Dr. Sharon Shewbridge, the director of Instructional Technology, are using data analytics to gain visibility into how district devices are being used both inside and outside the classroom. Together, the technology and instructional teams are using actionable data to inform and improve their processes and create further alignment between their teams as well as with the greater VBCPS community.

Here are four key data strategies VBCPS leaders have implemented to strengthen their learning environments:

1. Creating detailed usage trend reports for senior staff and administrators

Accountability is critical, particularly when you are a publicly funded school district. With such a significant portion of district budgets being allocated to technology, administrative leaders need access to quantifiable data that demonstrates the usage and effectiveness of their investments.

VBCPS's technology team will be using the insights gleaned from their data analytics tool to provide detailed, districtwide technology usage trend reports to senior staff members, thus equipping senior leaders with the verifiable data they need to share with their school boards and/or constituents.

"It's been extremely beneficial to compare usage information on a year-to-year basis," says Din. "Because the education year is cyclical, it is easy to track the usage of our school devices or a particular app and see if the usage has increased or decreased over a period of time. The pace of technology is blistering, so tracking these analytics enables us to keep our finger on the pulse of what is happening and quickly readjust our strategies to meet our students' needs."

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2. Measuring and tracking the district's ROI on technology purchases

VBCPS invested a significant amount of money in their 1:1 and digital learning initiatives, but they were lacking the ability to measure their ROI, leaving them unable to answer the question, "Are we getting what we paid for?"

Data analytics have empowered VBCPS with the insights needed to answer that question and truly quantify the value of their technology investments. "Our data provides us with the chance to see what is really being used and how it is being used," says Dr. Shewbridge. "Instead of continuing to renew contracts we have had in place for years, we are looking at our usage and determining if teachers are using the programs we are paying for. In some cases, they are electing to use other resources they find have a greater impact, are more user-friendly, or are free—saving us money as well as improving the teaching and learning experiences for our students and teachers."

3. Ensuring alignment to the curriculum and data privacy policies

With over 500,000 educational apps available in the global market, it can be extremely difficult for district leaders to have a comprehensive grasp of which tools and apps are being used in classrooms. This is one of the primary reasons VBCPS chose to integrate a data analytics tool into their system. "Our teachers were using over 900 apps and websites," says Dr. Shewbridge. "We are in the process of whittling that number down to ensure the apps and websites they are using align with our curriculum, state standards, and COPPA regulations." Dr. Shewbridge's team is creating lists of vetted and approved resources teachers

can quickly access when they need a powerful instructional tool, saving the teachers time and ensuring VBCPS's students are only using safe, effective, and age-appropriate educational materials.

4. Tracking e-learning days

The advent of devices in school districts has ushered in a new, growing phenomenon of e-learning day programs and initiatives. Learning management systems and other digital collaboration tools have made it possible for students to access their assignments and lessons even if their school is closed for a weather-related event, illness, or a teacher professional development day.

Although these days certainly offer a tremendous amount of benefits to both the district and students, it has proven difficult for leaders to track usage of school devices outside of school to ensure students are meeting expectations. District leaders in VBCPS recognize this challenge and are leveraging data analytics to attain visibility into the extent their applications and devices are being used by students during their online learning days. "We need to know if they are being used as much as we think they are, and our data analytics provides us with the insights we need to answer that question," says Din.

Harnessing the data produced by their school devices and online learning tools is empowering Virginia Beach's administrative leaders with the much-needed visibility to validate investments, inform instruction, and help safeguard student data. For two already-closely aligned instructional and technology teams, the ability to see and analyze their data is opening the door to a world of possibilities by enabling them to engage in impactful and conducive conversations.

About CatchOn

CatchOn is an expansive data analytics tool that compiles real-time data on every school device, enabling school districts to make data-informed decisions about the apps and online tools their educators and students are using. CatchOn is honored to work with dedicated and innovative school districts like Virginia Beach City Public Schools and see first-hand the transformative strategies they are implementing to improve and enhance learning for all students.
For more information about CatchOn, contact 866-615-1101 or solutions@catchon.com

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