

Case Study

Westmoreland Intermediate Unit#7

Westmoreland Intermediate Unit#7 integrates WizIQ Virtual Classroom in each of the 17 installations of Moodle Course Management System in Westmoreland County district schools.

Segment – K-12 Education

Challenge

A synchronous solution that could work inside Moodle for synchronous voice communication, interactive learning, and real-time collaboration.

Benefits

- Integrated WizIQ Virtual Classroom with Moodle in 2009, quick and easy without any additional investment.
- Blend "brick-and-mortar" teaching environment with online learning to create holistic approach to education.
- Offer online courses from different district schools to expand students learning choices.
- Create a consortium of online courses offered by teachers from district schools.

Solution

WizIQ Virtual Classroom



Introduction

Intermediate Units are regional educational service agencies created by the Pennsylvania State Legislature to provide support to local school districts, to expand educational services and to provide cost savings to tax payers by eliminating service redundancy and taking advantage of economy of scale.

There are 29 such agencies in the state of Pennsylvania. Westmoreland Intermediate Unit #7 is one of them, serving seventeen school districts, Clairview School, and three Westmoreland County Career and Technology Centers under the direct supervision of its board of directors and central administration.

With the WIUeAcademy, the WIU is trying to build capacity for online learning and blend the online environment with the "brick-and-mortar" environment. The school district partners in the WIUeAcademy are Belle Vernon Area, Burrell, Derry Area, Franklin Regional, Diocese of Greensburg, Hempfield, Jeannette, Kiski Area, Ligonier Valley, Monessen, Mt. Pleasant, New Kensington-Arnold, Norwin, Penn-Trafford, Southmoreland and Yough.

Challenge

According to Tim Hammill director WIUeAcademy, the agency was looking to provide a flexible environment where a student could still be in a brick-and-mortar school and have an option to take advanced online courses offered in other district schools.

One way to do that was to offer online courses using Moodle Course Management System that includes great features but no real-time interaction. But they wanted real-time interaction where a teacher could chat, hear and even see the students; use advanced content sharing tools and record classes.

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Solution

The eAcademy started looking for a solution and their search soon lead to WizIQ. "With WizIQ, we could see the possibilities straight away," said Tim, "We wanted something that could be used inside each of the 17 installations of Moodle Course Management System where teachers could connect with students in real-time and teach classes just as they would in the traditional classroom. They could even record their classes. All this without teachers or students having to download any software."

During an initial pilot program the WIUeAcademy has trained more than 250 teachers in the art of online instruction, each of whom are capable of writing, delivering and sharing course work with any student in a Westmoreland County school district as long as that district is part of the consortium.

““ *The quality of the support really helped us in going forward with the implementation and the response from the teachers has been enthusiastic.* ””

Tim Hammill, Director WIUeAcademy

Results

Today, Westmore County "brick-and-mortar schools" are not just competing with cyberschools by offering courses online, including the core courses of math, social studies and language arts but are also offering unique courses or courses that might not be offered in a student's district. Credit recovery courses also are offered through the eAcademy, and now students can opt to take extra courses online that are not offered in their district schools.