

Shaw High School is No. 1 in GA for Microsoft Office Certifications



Shaw High School

SCHOOL TYPE:

High School

COURSE TITLE:

- Introduction to Business Technology
- Business Communication
- Business Technology

CONTACT:

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Lakesha Kirkland teaches the business and technology pathway at Shaw High School in Columbus, Georgia. The pathway is an introduction to business technology and business communications. She talks about challenges, certifications, and shares some great tips for managing your classroom.

Scheduling and Staffing Changes Effect the Classroom

Introductory courses tend to be fairly high volume. And that's certainly the case for Kirkland with six sections of 28 students each.

Added to the challenge posed by pure numbers, Kirkland is facing a switch from block periods to the more traditional standard class periods. The switch allowed the school to manage the same number of students with fewer teachers. "Students are only going to be in here for only 50 minutes, that's going to be challenging," says Kirkland.

Kirkland also adds "Although scheduling will be challenging, our administration is very supportive of our efforts in preparing students for MOS certifications so we will still be able to ensure student success in testing for these certifications. It has such a tremendous effect on students and teachers when you know that your principal is proud of our students' accomplishments. Mr. Michael Barden, does whatever he can to ensure all students at Shaw High School leave with as many tools as necessary to be productive citizens upon graduation. Also our district is very supportive of MOS certifications. They purchase software to help with student success in training and testing for the Microsoft Office Specialist

certifications. Currently our district is looking to purchase a district license for the Business&ITCenter21 so all of our teachers are able to utilize the tools within this software. Without such a supportive administrative team as well as the support from our Georgia Department of Education, our students would not have these opportunities."

Meeting Employability Standards

Georgia has an intentional focus on employability standards. And so in each of Kirkland's classes, there's a common thread that supports that employability standard.

"I was able to use Business&ITCenter21 for that standard. I use the Professionalism module and the Job Seeking Skills module specifically to cover that standard. Students really enjoyed those two modules in that light," Kirkland shares.

She goes on to explain, "Then there are some entrepreneurship and financial literacy topics. There are some other things I can use in Business&ITCenter21. In the Business Technology class we were able to use the Access and Excel modules. The Word modules, I actually use that in all the classes."

What about Certifications?

When asked about certifications, Kirkland was ready to answer! "Well, I'm glad you asked about certifications because we were number one in the state for most certifications. So, you're speaking with a celebrity today!" she says jokingly.

Kirkland further explains, "Our kids have been doing really awesome here at Shaw. Last year was my first year using Business&ITCenter21. We were able to get more certifications this year than we did last year. We also had the most Master Level certifications in the state.

We were able to have students achieve a master in both suites. We are the only ones in the state to get Masters in both.” Wow!

Why are Certifications Important?

We asked Lakesha why those certifications are so important for students in the state of Georgia. Here’s how she explained it. “Here in Columbus, we have a lot of businesses that are looking for employees to have Microsoft Office certifications. One of my students interned at Aflac because the Aflac headquarters is here and they requested to see his transcript for his certifications. We also have one of the largest credit card processing centers here, TSYS. They do billions of dollars of business here. They do all the Visa, MasterCard and Wells Fargo and all those transactions here, and they want their employees to have those certifications as well. So I want to ensure my students are leaving with essential tools as they are entering the workforce.”

She added, “It is really important for our students to have those certifications so they can be competitive when they go out. Those companies are sending back some of the adults to get these skills and some of them are really struggling with obtaining these certifications that my students are breezing through. For our students, having those certifications gives them a leg up. I know some of the other states are doing the certifications, too. And we want to make sure that are students are competitive with those others as well.”

That’s a great service to these Georgia students!

Why is Business&ITCenter21 Right for Your Students?

So how is Kirkland getting her students prepared for certification exams?

“I was at a conference and someone said they have Business&ITCenter21. Today, I have been telling other teachers about it. Now, if I’m in a conference I’ll suggest it. I think it is really good, and very interactive. The kids are able to go through it and they seem to learn better with it.”

But Kirkland admits that one tool isn’t the answer to everything. They use another program to help them practice with how the actual tests looks. That way students get an experience that has the same feel and look of the actual certification exams they will have.

How to use it?

Kirkland shared a bit about how she uses Business&ITCenter21 in her classroom... everyone does it a little differently.

She requires students to get an 80% average or higher on a quiz to move forward. “I don’t accept anything below an 80 because there’s no reason for you to make less than that at the end. Either you didn’t grab the concepts or you weren’t listening. There’s a PowerPoint that goes with it, so you weren’t listening to me either when I was sharing the information in class and going over the handouts.”

Students are able to work at their own speed. Kirkland does an introduction and gives them some things to look for while doing the module in the system. She also shows them some new things in the software. Then, students sign on and start working through the module. At the end, Kirkland does a review with the class and then they take the test. They get just one try on the tests.

How does it help the teacher?

Of course resources that are worth the investment have to not only help students learn, but also make it worthwhile for the teacher. Kirkland describes how Business&ITCenter21 helps her: “It is able to grade the test

part for students. It shows me which students mastered concepts and which students need more help. That allows me to plan teaching as needed to work with those students more one on one.”

“It is really important for our students to have those [Microsoft Office] certifications so they can be competitive when they go out into the real world,”

says Kirkland.



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