

Customer Case Study

District: Cincinnati Public Schools

State: Ohio

District Size: 33,000 students

Economically Disadvantaged: 72%



“At Cincinnati Public Schools, we encourage our students to think beyond graduation, and take steps toward identifying and transitioning into meaningful careers. We wanted to expand our AP offerings, so that more students have the opportunity to earn college credits early and experience more of the rigor they will face in post-secondary studies.”

-- Laura Mitchell, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer.

Cincinnati Public Schools

Technology Enables Expanded Advanced Placement Program

With close to 72 percent of the student population considered economically disadvantaged, school administrators for Cincinnati Public Schools know that a brighter future begins with a better education - and they are determined to help create that future for their students. To better prepare Cincinnati students for their chosen career paths, the district launched its My Tomorrow*ed vision last year.

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses for All

During the 2013-2014 school year, only 50 percent of Cincinnati Public Schools High Schools offered AP classes. With the district focused on equity of learning, administrators knew there were experiences and opportunities many students were missing out on because of the lack of AP courses.

The technology and curriculum team quickly joined forces over the summer to roll out a test AP Blended Learning program, and students self selected. One teacher would instruct students at the seven schools, but would be in the classroom only once per week to make sure everyone was on track. However, little did they know that their test program would turn into *the* Blended Learning program for advanced academic coursework and one which other districts would look to as a pioneer in the industry.

Starting on a positive note, each student was equipped with a Netbook, wireless Internet access that is safe and filtered for educational purposes via a Kajeet SmartSpot®--a portable wireless MiFi hotspot--and access to software and apps that help organize and enhance the learning process. Students worked through the geography lessons and communicated regularly with their teacher and classmates. Many of these students would never have had access to AP courses before, but the technology is game changing for introducing them to rigorous coursework.

What started last year with one AP Human Geography course offered to 90 students in seven schools across the district, grew into an expansive roll-out for the 2015-2016 academic year, which includes offering five AP courses - Human Geography, Psychology, English Literature, Statistics and Environmental Science - with capacity to serve up to 520 students.

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"At Cincinnati Public Schools, we encourage our students to think beyond graduation, and take steps toward identifying and transitioning into meaningful careers," said Laura Mitchell, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer. "We wanted to expand our AP offerings, so that more students have the opportunity to earn college credits early and experience more of the rigor they will face in post-secondary studies."

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-- Debra Crawford,
Blended Learning
Coordinator

This coming school year, the administrators in Cincinnati's Public School system are taking a more thoughtful and planned approach to the AP course implementation. The district hosted week-long "Boot Camps" to introduce students and their parents to the academic challenges of AP courses, as well as to the technology they will use to do their coursework. As a result the students came to class with a stronger skill set and were better prepared for this unique classroom set up. Debra Crawford, Cincinnati's Blended Learning Coordinator, explains for many students, this may be the only opportunity to experience life on a college campus. For one week, they slept in the dorms, ate the cafeteria and talked with university students about their experiences.

Student and Teacher Learning

Because these AP teachers are not tied to one particular school where they would have daily interactions with fellow teachers and staff, the Blended Learning team hosts its own staff meetings so the instructors have a sense of community. Crawford explains how this pedagogy change has been interesting to watch over the past year.

When the teacher is only with the class for one to two days a week, they must be very engaging to keep the students' attention.

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In addition to coursework that will prepare these students to take the AP test in the spring, Crawford admits the students are gaining many valuable life skills as part of this program. Since the students do not have a teacher in the classroom each day, they must learn to manage time and reach out to classmates and their teacher when needed. "They are finding a sense of community with other students taking the course even if they are at another school."

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Crawford's team continues to learn along the way. After the first year, they determined student/teacher face-to-face interaction once a week just wasn't enough. Both teachers and students needed that face time more frequently. As a result, the teachers now visit the physical classroom at a minimum of two to three times a week and are limited to only instructing five classes.

Student Success

The first year results show great success for the students of Cincinnati Public Schools with 64 program students taking the AP Geography exam in the spring.

"These are experiences these students wouldn't have had before this," Crawford says.

As the technology and curriculum team see improved student outcomes with technology at school and at home via the AP Blended Learning program, they are looking to expand the take-home learning program within other classrooms to provide similar filtered Internet access at home. By providing this opportunity to many of its economically disadvantaged students, school administrators are seeing renewed classroom engagement, improved time management skills, and an increased interest in post secondary education - all clear indicators of a brighter future.

The Kajeet Solution

Kajeet was founded in 2003 with the goal of providing children and parents a safe mobile experience. The Kajeet SmartSpot®, a MiFi brand mobile hotspot by Novatel Wireless, with customizable filters to limit Internet access to safe, educational sites, offers students a way to continue educational pursuits beyond the classroom.



Each student is equipped with a Netbook, wireless Internet access that is safe and filtered for educational purposes via a Kajeet SmartSpot®--a portable wireless MiFi hotspot.



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