

CASE STUDY:

Fremont School District 21, Wyoming

eAcademy for Virtual Education (WeAVE) — Ft. Washakie, WY

The Eastern Shoshone in North-Central Wyoming

The area comprising Wyoming's Wind River Reservation is rich with history, much of it—like the land itself—compelling and beautiful, some of it painful and tragic. The Eastern Shoshone who called this area home had always attempted to get along with the whites who were moving into their hunting grounds; in fact, Sacajawea, the young Shoshone woman who helped guide Lewis and Clark on their epochal journey, was from the area and is buried on the reservation.



But, as was usually the case when invaders wielding the technology of the industrial revolution came into contact with indigenous populations lacking those technologies, the Eastern Shoshone suffered and their freedom was abridged. An 1863 treaty forced the tribe onto a reservation of about 44 million acres, and a subsequent treaty reduced that area, now shared by the Eastern Shoshone and the Northern Arapahoe nations, to not quite 3 million acres.

Online Courses Help Reverse Decline

But now technology is helping to remove the very barriers it helped to create. Ft. Washakie Charter High School's Wyoming E-Academy of Virtual Education (WeAVE) is using online high courses from Class.com to help its students graduate from high school.

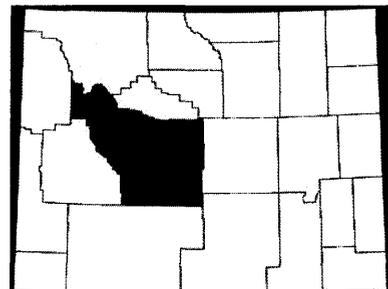
"What we needed," says Gene M. Meier, District 21's associate superintendent and director of WeAVE, "was flexibility: tools that provided the essentials but which would also allow the flexibility we needed so that teachers could pick and choose, share and integrate."

The Challenge

Wyoming is vast, sparsely populated, wide open, and wind-swept. Its austere beauty is enchanting but, especially in the small towns and on the reservation, it isn't a land that lends itself to schooling: Students (and teachers) must deal with unreasonable distances to school, inconsistent attendance, and a historic dropout rate that can range from 60% to 70%.

The Response

One way to encourage student motivation and deal with the issue of distance is to use high-quality online courses to supplement learning. Ft. Washakie's virtual school, located in Fremont County's School District #21, is one of only three charter high schools in Wyoming;



WeAVE is the only public online high school in the state and the only one in the country operated by a Native American school district.

The Choice

Why use Class.com courses? First, the courses are research-based, having grown out of a federal grant dedicated to creating a complete and effective online curriculum. The University of Nebraska CLASS project, which began in 1996, involved hundreds of teachers, technicians, instructional designers, and content-matter experts, and the result is a complete online high school curriculum, all of it based on sound educational research.

"We really appreciate the research that went into the courses and the wealth of knowledge that teachers from all over the country put into it. That makes it more credible and even more real. It's not 'just some content company,' but a group of educators who've created a strong educational experience," says WeAVE's Meier.

Results

But what really counts, of course, are results, and like most schools that use Class.com courses, WeAVE can point to success stories that can be directly attributed to the online educational experience.

"State assessments are going up," says Meier. "We're showing that we're actually decreasing the existing gap between Native American and other students. In fact, this past spring, 55% of our students increased their reading and writing proficiency levels by one or two levels—that's huge!"

Class.com courses are fun and engaging, but that doesn't mean they're not rigorous. In fact, says Meier, "Over 90% of our students say that the courses are hard, but that their retention levels are much higher than in a traditional classroom." According to Meier, this is due to the fact that the courses force students to engage and to read and write. "Most students polled say that the courses prepare them better for college," Meier notes.

About Wyoming E-Academy of Virtual Education (WeAVE)

One of three charter high schools in the state, Ft. Washakie Charter High School is the only public online high school in the state. It's the only virtual school in the country operated by a Native American school district.

About Class.com

Class.com provides over 50 online courses to secondary students by providing local school districts and organizations with complete e-learning solutions: Internet-based courses, training, software hosting, and consulting services. Through these partnerships, Class.com helps innovative educators create new learning opportunities in local communities.

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*Gene M. Meier
Associate Superintendent,
Fremont School District #21
Director, WeAVE
Fort Washakie, WY*

The Challenge

Students and teachers must deal with unreasonable distances, inconsistent school attendance, and a dropout rate that can range from 60% to 70%.

The Solution

Class.com's high-quality, research-based online courses supplement students' learning, keep them engaged, and provide opportunities for educational success.

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