

C.W. Ruckel Middle School Niceville, FL

Goals

C.W. Ruckel, generally a high-achieving school, initially introduced Adaptive Curriculum for its lower-achieving students, according to seventh-grade science teacher Alan Anderson.

“In our regular classes, as opposed to our advanced classes, we hadn’t yet found the right combination to help students connect with school,” says Alan. “We wanted to help these students value their school experience more and improve their scores on standardized tests.”

The school wanted a computer-driven solution because of students’ positive response to technology, along with the ability to track student progress and the flexibility to use with whole group and individual instruction. Other major requirements were alignment to the Florida Sunshine State Standards and easy navigation for students and teachers.

According to sixth-grade science teacher Chris Brown, the school was also looking for a solution with a real-world focus. “We believe that a relevant curriculum is an effective curriculum—students need to be able to apply their knowledge in the real world in order to retain it.”

“Adaptive Curriculum is their favorite thing to do all week.”

-Alan Anderson,
7th-Grade Science Teacher

Demographics:

- 800 Students
- Title I
- 87% White
- 2% African-American
- 2% Hispanic

Implementation with Different Groups

Adaptive Curriculum, which teachers saw at the Florida Educational Technology Conference in January 2010, appeared to address these needs. The school set up a controlled study in which one regular sixth-grade science class uses Adaptive Curriculum and the other does not. Both seventh-grade regular science classes are using the program.

The implementation was also expanded to include the advanced science students. “This group is intrinsically motivated,” says Alan, “but Adaptive Curriculum meets a different need. I’m using it with these students in presentation mode, to introduce concepts using the classroom projector. It’s excellent for introducing a unit and for reinforcement.”

Building Enthusiasm

Adaptive Curriculum is addressing the school’s goal of building motivation. “It’s working,” says Alan. “Students like it because it’s entertaining and realistic. It’s also very easy for them to log on and jump right in.”

When Alan’s students arrive on Mondays, their Adaptive Curriculum assignments are up on the



board. "They always rush to check the board," says Alan. "Adaptive Curriculum is their favorite thing to do all week, and it's all they would do if I would let them. They enjoy using the concepts I'm teaching in class to solve problems, so it motivates them and reinforces concepts. They're even accessing assignments early and jumping ahead—a good problem to have."

According to Chris, Adaptive Curriculum allows teachers to cover the material in a different way and reinforce instruction. "We do have labs and hands-on science, but we also have space and budget limitations," says Chris. "Adaptive Curriculum provides a different way to teach the content, with a real-world focus, and it's a way that students like."

Students can log on to Adaptive Curriculum at home, and many choose to do so, according to Chris and Alan. "When students take it upon themselves to do more at home, that's a good sign," says Chris. "When I ask students to work on vocabulary words at home, maybe eight will do it," says Alan, "but twice that number volunteer to work on Adaptive Curriculum at home."

Alan believes that students are enthusiastic because Adaptive Curriculum appeals to different learning styles and to digital-age learners. "Some students are more visual, and some are more tactile. Adaptive Curriculum works for both groups," says Alan. "And it feeds into their way of learning much more than listening to me or reading a textbook."

"The Adaptive Curriculum tests give me a window into how students are doing and where they need help."

*-Alan Anderson,
7th-Grade Science Teacher*

"The Adaptive Curriculum students are doing better than the control group."

*-Chris Brown
6th-Grade Science Teacher*

Improving Performance

According to Chris, teachers enjoy being able to present to different cognitive levels at the same time using the differentiated instruction available through Adaptive Curriculum. This capability, along with the positive response from students, is impacting student performance.

As part of the control group study, students were tested at the beginning of the year and will be tested again at the end, with ongoing interim assessments. "The Adaptive Curriculum students are doing better than the control group," says Chris, "so we are seeing good progress toward our goal of improved student achievement."

According to Alan, "My students are doing better and better on the Adaptive Curriculum built-in assessments, and they say that the tests are helping them. I like that the tests are only five questions, so students don't mind doing them. They also give me a window into how students are doing and where they need help."

Alan emphasizes that his students are experiencing more success in science and building a new sense of mastery, "which is so good for them," he says. The school is evaluating progress toward its goals and considering an expansion to all 800 students next year.

For more information on Adaptive Curriculum:

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