



Microsoft® Office Specialist

Helps Texas Students Develop Workforce Skills

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Success Story



FRENSHIP INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Location:

Wolfforth, Texas

Total School Enrollment:

7,300 students

Program enrollment:

60 students

Success Metrics:

- Relevant business-world skills
- Recognized and valued by industry
- Motivation for deeper learning



CERTIFICATION PROGRAM GIVES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SKILLS THAT TRANSFER INTO REAL WORLD APPLICATION

CHALLENGE

Frenship High School, the only high school in Frenship Independent School District (ISD) near Lubbock, Texas, has offered courses in Microsoft® Office for many years. When Cindy Miller was hired as the Frenship District Coordinator for Career and Technical Education in 2003, she found a problem with the district's

Business Computer Information Systems (BCIS) course.

Students who had taken the BCIS course continued to struggle to put their knowledge to use in the real world. Frenship students were generally unable to perform situational tasks that required them to problem solve using the functions and features they had studied in class, such as building or importing a table in a Microsoft Word® document.

"It's one thing to learn how to create a table and another thing for students to apply that table to a specific set of information they are given," Miller said. "We had a lot of industry people saying our kids knew the software, but couldn't apply it in the real world."

SOLUTION

Miller felt industry certification would help students validate that they could apply the skills they learned, so she implemented Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification soon after joining Frenship.

Frenship students who take the required BCIS 1 course learn the basics of Microsoft Office and are eligible to sign up for BCIS 2 the subsequent year to learn more advanced features of Microsoft Word, Excel® and PowerPoint®. Then, students can earn up to three certifications for each of the applications.

Miller says the skills students gain while preparing for certification build creativity and self-empowerment.

"Our kids take it to the next level to see how far they can push the program," Miller said. "For me, this is what learning is all about. It's not just the certification they get – they're learning to think, make decisions, become more innovative and creative to make their projects the best they can."

Business and technology teacher Janet Flusche says she incorporates project-based learning with business relevance to help students prepare for the exams and the workforce. The in-depth learning required to prepare for certification allows students to apply their new skills in

Microsoft® Office Specialist

"Ninety-five percent of the industry in this area all use Microsoft Office whether it's in construction, law, banking—it doesn't make any difference. When [job candidates] come in with this certification, every industry knows what [it] is."

– **Cindy Miller, district coordinator for career and technical education at Frenship ISD**

other subjects as well. Flusche said one student approached her after making a breakthrough in Excel.

"He came in and said, 'I worked all night on this formula for Excel in Engineering. I finally came up with this by looking deep into the program like you showed us,'" Flusche said.

Flusche estimates more than 350 students have earned at least one MOS certification over the past seven years at Frenship High School. The program is more affordable than ever, even for a small district like Frenship ISD. With the recent introduction of the MOS Classroom License, Flusche said her costs have dropped from \$25 to \$16 per exam. "The price is amazing and affordable for a school district on a tight budget," she said.

RESULTS

The Frenship MOS certification program is also helping students succeed in the workforce. Recently, former BCIS 2 student Graysen Ortega was able to solve a problem using Microsoft Office that stumped all of his co-workers. "That happens a lot," Flusche said.

Ortega, a senior, says earning Microsoft Office Specialist certification has been a differentiator in the workforce. "My certification was a major factor in getting a job," he said. "I use the skills I learned every day at work and my employer is always amazed at what I can accomplish in Microsoft Office. Not only did working towards certification make me more employable, it gave me skills I can use for the rest of my life."

Miller says the skills students acquire through the MOS certification often surpass those who learn Microsoft applications on the job. "The students are the experts," she said. "Our kids have advanced skills, so when they go out there and produce a pivot table in Excel, that's really impressive for [professionals who] didn't even know a pivot table existed."

Former Frenship ISD Assistant Superintendent Steve Burleson, who helped start the program with Miller in 2003, said certification carries value in the workforce. "Students can show a prospective employer they are highly qualified for the positions they apply for," he said.

Many local employers agree. Miller said a business advisory committee associated with Frenship High School indicated the MOS certification program has made an impact on hiring practices.

"Businesses are going to interview the person with the certification before they interview the one without," Miller said. "Almost every industry in this area uses Microsoft Office - construction, law, banking — all of them. When job candidates come in with Microsoft Office Specialist certification, every industry recognizes it."

The business advisory committee has also commended the Frenship Business Department for continuing to offer the program. "They can't believe other schools don't require this course in their curriculum," Miller said. "They are pleased our students graduate with the technology skills they need to be successful on the job."

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