



Microsoft® Office Specialist

Classroom License Makes Certification Affordable for California High School

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Success Story



OAK PARK HIGH SCHOOL

Location:

Oak Park, California

Total School Enrollment:

1,400 students

Success Metrics:

- Budgeting and administrative simplicity
- Valuable credential
- Core articulation component



ONE-YEAR CLASSROOM LICENSE EASES TIGHT BUDGETS AND ALLOWS MORE STUDENTS TO CERTIFY

CHALLENGE

Oak Park High School of Thousand Oaks, California, has a reputation for progressive education rooted in leading-edge technological tools. Recently, the community passed a \$17

million bond to ensure the school and its students had access to the latest computing, SMART board and hi-bandwidth Internet technologies.

However, when computer technology instructor Erik Amerikaner joined Oak Park High School in 2007, his plan to implement a Microsoft® Office Specialist certification program hit a roadblock.

"Finances were the big issue," said Amerikaner.

The school's computer applications course was a requirement for graduation and advancement to other technology courses at Oak Park, yet students had nothing to show for their acquired skills. Despite a lack of immediate funding, MOS certification seemed like a natural fit and Amerikaner was determined to find a way to overcome budget restraints.

"The students needed something to prove their skills to employers - an achievement they could place on their college portfolio and career resume," said Amerikaner.

SOLUTION

Amerikaner approached Vice Principal Jerry Block about bringing the MOS certification to Oak Park, and Block embraced the idea immediately.

"It took him about ten seconds to convince me, I think," Block recalled with a laugh.

"Certification was very much in line with our school's vision of providing career paths for students."

While searching for funding solutions, Amerikaner helped solidify an articulation agreement with nearby Moorpark College to accept the Microsoft Office Specialist Word and PowerPoint® certification for college credit and give Oak Park graduates priority registration. With administration support and a new articulation agreement in place, Amerikaner turned to a new offering from Certiport to help ease the budget pains; the Microsoft Office Specialist Classroom License.

Dr. LeeAnne DelRio, a regional grant coordinator with the California Department of Education, assisted Amerikaner in securing funding for the certification program, preparation materials and an upgrade to Microsoft Office 2007. DelRio said the flat fee for 12 months of high volume certification exams made the Classroom License a simple financial decision.

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– Jerry Block, vice principal at Oak Park High School

"It's really hard to get things approved through the educational system if you don't know how much you are going to spend," DelRio said. "Boards don't like that because it's really hard to create a budget."

In addition to reducing budget uncertainty to allow for grant funding, Amerikaner said the Classroom License also offered flexibility to administer more exams while minimizing administrative headaches.

"The Classroom License allows me to do what I need to do without buying vouchers all the time," said Amerikaner. "The price is absolutely phenomenal, and there's no pressure on us that if the kids don't pass the exam, we're out \$75."

RESULTS

With funding in hand, Amerikaner implemented the software upgrade and Microsoft Office Specialist certification program in Fall 2009. As a Microsoft Office Master Instructor since 2003, Amerikaner has seen the benefits of helping to certify more than 300 students at Oak Park and his previous school.

"They're expected to come out of high school with basic computer proficiency, and the Microsoft Office Specialist certification proves that," said Amerikaner.

Block also believes certification is a differentiator for students. "Certification is about preparing our students for life beyond high school," said Block. "If students learn about computers and have a tangible item on their resumé, it makes them stand out from the competition."

The best part for Amerikaner is the program is sustainable. Since starting the certification program through what he calls a "three-legged partnership" with DelRio and a colleague at Moorpark College, they have found another grant that will help to renew the Classroom License next year and potentially in successive years.

The model has been successful and DelRio thinks other high schools throughout the state and region should adopt certification using the Classroom License.

"I don't think any of our students should leave high school without verifiable Microsoft Office skills," said DelRio. "I think something that documents your experience and expertise is always worthwhile. Things like this make students more valuable in the workplace."

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