



ILLINOIS CHSD 218

LOCATION:

Oak Lawn, Illinois

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT:

300 per year

SUCCESS METRICS:

- » Community college dual credit opportunity for high school students
- » Industry-recognized validation for CTE courses
- » Prepares students for college and career

Illinois School District Enhances Career and Technical Education Program with Microsoft Office Specialist

Success Story

www.certiport.com/mos

"If they go to work and have MOS on their resume, it will open doors. If they go to college, it is going to help them be successful."

Frank LaMantia
Curriculum Director of CTE

Community High School District 218 Helps Students Earn College Credit and Become Work Ready with GMetrix and Microsoft Office Specialist Certification

CHALLENGE

Illinois Community High School District 218 (CHSD 218) is a public high school district serving 11 communities in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. The district enrollment is 5,329 students in three comprehensive high schools and one alternative high school. The three comprehensive high schools, Eisenhower, Shepard and Richards, offer Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. The alternative high school, Delta, offers courses in Business Education.

CHSD 218 CTE courses aim to give students the skills necessary for future

employment as well as prepare them for advanced training at the post-secondary level. Several of their courses are approved dual credit courses that allow students to earn credit at Moraine Valley Community College while still enrolled in high school.

Several years ago CHSD 218 sought a solution to increase student engagement and help grow the CTE program. Interest in Business Education courses had been slowing, and Frank LaMantia, Curriculum Director of CTE, was looking for a new validation tool for the program.



Microsoft
Office Specialist

"I wanted to get the students excited again, bring more relevance and credibility to our program and revitalize the Business Education courses."

LaMantia and his colleagues searched for an industry-recognized certification that would serve several purposes to prepare students for college and the workforce while offering dual credit opportunities.

SOLUTION

As CHSD 218 looked to bolster the Business Education program, Certiport ran a promotion offering teachers free Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification. MOS is the leading IT certification in the world, and allows individuals to demonstrate they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to productively use Microsoft Office. Several CHSD 218 CTE teachers received free vouchers from Certiport and successfully completed the MOS certification exam.

Once LaMantia saw his teachers earning MOS certification, he researched expanding the program for students. He worked with Certiport to establish a pilot program and started by giving three students at each high school the opportunity to take the certification exams at no charge.

"The pilot program went very well and showed us high school students could be successful at earning MOS certification," says LaMantia. "Once we had a few teachers certified and a few students, we were ready to implement MOS certification on a larger scale."

CHSD 218, as a member of the regional Moraine Area Career System, is eligible to receive funding from Illinois Career and Technical Education grants. After discussion, it was decided that the inclusion of a curriculum component would be an approved grant expense. As a result, CHSD 218 researched MOS preparation tools as a curriculum component and found GMetrix.

"GMetrix is an important part of the solution and ultimately our success," says LaMantia. "I let the teachers choose what would be best and they felt GMetrix best prepares their students for MOS certification."

GMetrix practice tests simulate the certification exam, so students can get comfortable with the testing process and practice concepts before taking the high-stakes exam. By implementing GMetrix, CHSD 218 was able to obtain grant funding and purchase site licenses for both GMetrix and MOS certification at each of the three comprehensive high schools.

Another part of implementation was working on dual credit opportunities. LaMantia worked with Moraine Valley Community College to set up several dual credit courses whereby students could earn MOS certification and college credit at the same time.

RESULTS

As CHSD 218 implemented MOS certification they saw both a rapid increase in student engagement and the opportunity for CTE staff to expand their skills.

"I have two teachers who are now also teaching the coordinating courses at Moraine Valley Community College," says LaMantia. "MOS certification has given them skills that are current in the marketplace and helped them to expand their teaching career opportunities."

During the first year of the program, 108 CHSD 218 students earned MOS certification. LaMantia and his Business Education teachers refined their courses, and the next year, 173 students earned MOS certification. The third year, an impressive 260 student's earned certification. "Our teachers are comfortable with the curriculum, students understand the benefits of certification and we are having great success," says LaMantia. "In my job I have to show success in numbers and the numbers now speak for themselves with greater than 80 percent success rate for students earning MOS certification."

Shepard High School Business Education Teacher Jennifer Klein says she sees three main benefits of MOS for her students. "First, it helps to prepare them for college classes so they can focus on the content of the course instead of how to use the software. Second, certification can earn them

college credit. Last but not least, certification can get them a job. Many employers are looking for people with experience in Microsoft Office."

LaMantia likes how MOS certification helps to engage students and bridge the gap from high school to higher education. "We can now validate that our program is preparing students with technology skills that are recognized by industry."

Recently a sophomore studied outside of his regular coursework and eventually became a MOS Master which requires more advanced MOS certifications. Once LaMantia and his colleagues saw younger students could be successful, they restructured their courses to allow students to start earning MOS certification earlier in their high school years. The first course exposes students to the MOS PowerPoint exam, followed by the MOS Word exam, then MOS Excel and MOS Access. With the new program structure they hope to see a spike in enrollment and more students earning the MOS Master designation.

"Everything the student does at the high school level with a recognizable name like Microsoft is going to help them regardless of their career choice," says LaMantia. "If they go to work and have MOS on their resume, it will open doors. If they go to college, it is going to help them be successful."

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