



# Microsoft® Office Specialist

Queen Anne's County High School Maximizes Impact of Microsoft Office Specialist Exams

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Success Story

## QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL BUSINESS PROGRAM

### Location:

Centreville, Maryland

### Program enrollment:

90 - 110 per year

### Success Metrics:

- Leading application certification testing
- Career and technical education
- Employer-valued credential

## BUSINESS DEPARTMENT EMBRACES LONGSTANDING MOS PROGRAM AND CERTIFIES NEARLY 100 STUDENTS EACH YEAR

### CHALLENGE

Queen Anne's County High School (QACHS) serves more than 1200 students in the Eastern shore town of Centreville, Maryland. One mission of QACHS is to ensure that all students receive challenging academic, vocational and cultural experiences. Approximately ten years ago, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) partnered with Certiport and made the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) exams available to high schools in the region.

Tina Thomas, Instruction Supervisor for Queen Anne's County Public Schools, explains the push for certification. "We are focused on college and career readiness and one of the things we want our students to have when they leave our schools is the ability to be successful in college but also to be successful in the workplace."

Soon after QACHS received access to the MOS exams, Dennis Macy, a 29-year veteran at the school, took over as Business Department Chairperson and inherited the responsibility of helping students earn certification.

Macy and his team at QACHS knew getting more kids certified was a priority. "I felt it was important for our students to have a solid background in Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Access because I knew these skills were essential for college or for students applying for a job right out of high school."

However, the program was not being fully utilized and when Macy first took over; QACHS was certifying just five students per year. Macy set out to bring the program to its full potential and get more students MOS certified.

### SOLUTION

LMOS certification is available to all QACHS students who enroll in one of the business pathways. Students have the opportunity to get as many certifications as they wish at no cost since the school pays for the exams.

The MSDE purchased Certiport's MOS Site License to make the exams more affordable – a program that allows the schools to administer a high volume of exams for one set price. Dr. Nicole Buzzetto-More, Associate Professor at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, said they aim to help business departments such as the one at Queen Anne's redesign their curriculum to align with the certification standards.

"The Microsoft tasks are application-based, so we want students to have a lot of hands on training, do a lot of real world application and also participate in practice testing. We are asking these students to go beyond the average usage so it takes some guidance from the teachers to help them along."

The teachers in the business department at QACHS bought into the MOS program and worked together to teach students Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Access. "Having buy-in from the

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– **Dennis Macy,**  
**Business Department**  
**Chairperson,**  
**Queen Anne's County**  
**High School**

teachers was essential to making the MOS program work," said Macy. "Our teachers realize that these applications play a major role in students being successful outside of the building when they go to college or work for an employer."

QACHS students take introductory courses to learn the programs, then take an advanced course to master their skills and take the MOS certification exams. During the introductory course, teachers begin to tell students about the MOS program to build excitement and motivate them to earn as many certifications as they can during high school.

QACHS also worked with a sister school, Kent Island High School, to share preparation materials and successfully implement certification. They have found that a more collaborative, less-structured system works well for preparing the students for certification.

"Every student learns differently, so we let them choose the preparation methods that work best for them," said Macy. "When you are working with certifications and getting your students to buy into the program, you have to be flexible and allow the students to learn the software on their own."

## RESULTS

From humble beginnings with five students certified in his first year, Macy and his team at QACHS progressed to certify 25 students in the second year, and now they are certifying 85 to 100 students every year.

"We are preparing students to take a third party test with higher standards that are recognized by industry and also by universities," said Macy. "The students pull for each other and the teachers are cheerleaders as well. I look at success based on the fact so many of our business students are holding that certification in their hands when they walk out of the building."

QACHS students perform very well on the certification exams, and one student, Breana Guarnera, even qualified as the Microsoft Word 2007 Finalist for the United States and competed in the 2011 Worldwide Competition on Microsoft Office.

"I am interested in business and have always been pretty good with Microsoft Word for my school projects," said Breana. "When Mr. Macy approached me about certification, I was excited because I want to pursue anything that will help me in the future. I have only taken one semester of computer courses so far since I am a freshman, but now I use those skills every day."

Many QACHS students have become excited about certification, and they are discovering the benefits of earning as many as possible during their time in high school. One student, Taylor Hartman, has earned Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Excel Expert certification. "I thought at first this was going to be an easy class," she said. "But then my Dad told me that people at his work have certifications and that it really looks good on your resume no matter what field you go into. I realized you definitely want to try to get certified in the class."

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