



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

LOCATION:

North Carolina, Statewide

TOTAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENT:

51,000 students per year

SUCCESS METRICS:

- » Program available to all students in diverse demographics
- » Validation from Microsoft, an industry leading software provider
- » Certification validates in-demand workforce technology skills

Public Schools of North Carolina Implements Microsoft Office Specialist and Microsoft Technology Associate Certification Statewide

Success Story

www.certiport.com/mos

"The Microsoft IT Academy allows students to prove to employers they have a specific skill that is in demand."

Aaron Fleming

Director of Career and Technical Education (CTE)
Lee County Public Schools.

Microsoft
Office Specialist

Microsoft
Technology Associate

North Carolina Teachers and Students Earn More than 100,000 Industry-Recognized Certifications

CHALLENGE

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) provides leadership to 115 local public school districts and 107 charter schools serving over 1.5 million students in kindergarten through high school graduation. The agency is responsible for all aspects of the state's public school system and focuses on Career and Technical Education to help prepare students for the future.

"I think the goal of public schools today, like it has always been, is to make sure students are successful

after they graduate high school," says Aaron Fleming, Director of Career and Technical Education (CTE), Lee County Public Schools.

For several years, the most popular CTE elective in North Carolina has been Computer Applications I, which helps students master skills in areas such as word processing, spreadsheets, desktop publishing, and presentation applications. However, the course was based on general principles and did not always teach industry leading technologies used in the business

world. The course did not include a certification to help students validate to potential employers that they have the necessary skills to perform on the job.

“Our charge is to prepare students for the workforce and there is nothing more valuable than facilitating students getting credentials recognized by people around the world,” says Dr. June Atkinson, North Carolina State Superintendent.



SOLUTION

Dr. Atkinson’s CTE staff came to her with the idea of a statewide licensing agreement to give their students, wherever they lived in North Carolina, the opportunity to earn information technology credentials such as the Microsoft Office Specialist or Microsoft Technology Associate.

“We saw an opportunity with Microsoft and Certiport, the certification exam administrator, to replace an outdated curriculum and give our students a curriculum that would remain current with materials from Microsoft and certification exams,” says Carol Short, CTE Curriculum Section Chief at NCDPI.

The Microsoft IT Academy includes web-based modules and instruction enabling students to master applications such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Access. Students earn certifications as a Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA), Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) or a Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) by completing the Microsoft IT Academy coursework and passing certification exams.

“In today’s economy, providing these certifications to high schools just made sense because the ability to effectively use Word, Excel, PowerPoint

and Access are essential skills in most businesses and offices today,” said Atkinson. “Plus, with a statewide agreement, low income students would have the same access to these certifications as a student who lives in a very wealthy community in our state.”

A statewide license saved money for each of the 115 North Carolina school districts as opposed to negotiating their own license agreement. In November 2010, North Carolina became the first state in the nation to offer the Microsoft IT Academy Program in high schools statewide. The primary funding for the initiative came from federal Carl D. Perkins dollars.

Atkinson attributes their implementation success to a dedicated CTE staff and a pilot program. “You have to start off with a pilot program to help sell the idea to other schools. Once they see the success of the pilot program you get immediate buy in.”

High schools in 29 counties piloted the program including MOS and MTA certification during Fall 2010 before it was extended to 72 counties in Spring 2011. It was implemented statewide in the fall of 2011.

RESULTS

Since then, the program has been implemented in 113 school districts and approximately 590 high schools statewide. More than 100,000 students and teachers have earned certifications and North Carolina is now the largest Microsoft IT Academy in the world. The program has now been adopted by 58 community colleges in the state of North Carolina, the first statewide community college network to adopt the Microsoft IT Academy and certification program.

“The Microsoft IT Academy and accompanied certification program enables tens of thousands of students and teachers to gain relevant workplace skills and add valuable, industry-recognized certifications to their resumes,” says Atkinson. “With these courses and credentials under their belts, our students will graduate better prepared to succeed in college and compete for a job in the global economy.”

Students agree as they are finding many benefits from earning certification in high school including increased confidence. “I’ve accomplished more than just taking a class or getting a good grade,” says Alison Wall, a sophomore at Green Hope High School. “I’ve been able to walk away with something that will benefit me for the rest of my life.”

Eighty North Carolina high school students and teachers have gone above and beyond and earned an industry-recognized Microsoft Master certification by completing MOS exams for Word Expert, Excel Expert, PowerPoint, and any one of Outlook, Access, OneNote, and SharePoint.

“The Microsoft IT Academy allows students to prove to employers they have a specific skill that is in demand,” said Fleming. “The MOS program is one way to close the skills gap – it’s one way for employers to find someone to fill exactly what they need in an open position.”

ABOUT CERTIPOINT

Certiport, a Pearson VUE business, is the leading provider of certification exam development, delivery and program management services delivered through an expansive network of over 12,000 Certiport Authorized Testing Centers worldwide. Certiport manages a sophisticated portfolio of leading certification programs including: the official Microsoft Office Specialist certification program, the Microsoft Technology Associate certification program, the Microsoft Certified Educator program, the Adobe® Certified Associate certification program, the HP Accredited Technical Associate, the CompTIA Strata™ IT Fundamentals, the Autodesk Certified User certification program, the Intuit QuickBooks Certified User certification program, and the Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC³®). Certiport reliably delivers over two million tests each year throughout the secondary, post-secondary, workforce, and corporate technology markets in more than 148 countries and 27 languages worldwide. For more information, please visit www.certiport.com or follow Certiport on Twitter at www.twitter.com/certiport.

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