Microsoft Technology Associate Certification

La Salle College High School Adopts
Microsoft Technology Associate Program
to Start Students on Technology Path

La Salle
College High School

LA SALLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Location:

Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania

Program Enrollment:
200 students per year

Success Metrics:

- Entry-level technology certification

- Preparation for further Microsoft certifications

- Selling point for private school

Private High School Now Certifies 200 Students Every Year, Many Earn Advanced Certifications

CHALLENGE

La Salle College High School is a private school in Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania with 1,063 young men enrolled. The core program balances academics, athletics, the arts and community service, and an impressive 100 percent of La Salle graduates go onto college.

"Parents who are looking for a private school education are looking for value-added benefits for their children," said Joseph Marchese, Principal, La Salle College High School. "We've been a Microsoft IT Academy for about 10 years now, so we have long been providing our students with excellent technology training."

Marchese and his team at La Salle knew their technology program taught students valuable skills, but they had some difficulty successfully validating those skills with an industry-recognized certification. Some students took the Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) exams, but many were unprepared for such an advanced certification.

"I started going through classes at La Salle and jumped right into the MCTS by taking the Windows 7 MCTS," said Sam French, student. "I bombed it! I almost gave up on technology."

La Salle's Chief Information Officer Peter Sigmund had attended education technology conferences and talked to Microsoft Learning, but he found that the certification path was lacking the basics. "It is very difficult to teach kids MCTS classes at this level when the certification path doesn't teach network or server fundamentals," said Sigmund.

As a result, Sigmund and the technology team at La Salle kept their ears and eyes open for an entry-level technology certification program they could adopt and offer in-house to students.

SOLUTION

Sigmund attended another education technology conference and heard about the new Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) certification. MTA was developed to fill the gap La Salle was experiencing, as the first step on the Microsoft technology certification roadmap. The exams would provide a basis for students to pursue a career in technology and validate a variety of basic IT and development technology knowledge prior to earning more advanced Microsoft technology certifications.

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Technology Associate

Sigmund received a warm reception from his colleagues when he presented MTA. "It didn't take a lot for us to buy into the MTA program once we heard about it," said Marchese. "We are well-known as a technology leader in the area, and the benefit of MTA to our students would be great."

Offering an industry-recognized certification like MTA would be a selling point for a private school like La Salle, and becoming a Certiport Authorized Testing Center to offer the exams right at the school was extremely desirable. Sigmund explains, "What really sold me on the MTA was working with Certiport and having the ability to test on site. I knew testing on site would raise our pass rates and raise the number of kids taking the exams by leaps and bounds."

La Salle quickly became a Certiport Authorized Testing Center and began to offer the MTA exams to students, differentiating their students with industry certifications – all from the classroom.

In conjunction with the MTA certification, La Salle implemented an innovative hands-on learning experience called the Lab Manager program. Technology students who have earned their MTA certification assist the technology department in maintaining the school's network. They perform tasks ranging from setting up a printer to troubleshooting the network, giving them invaluable real-world experience with the technologies they learn in La Salle courses and validate with the MTA exams.

RESULTS

La Salle students and their families were eager to participate and MTA was an instant success. Nicholas Coggins, La Salle Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, explains how the program is helping them stand above other high schools. "MTA offers an amazing opportunity for students and it's a major selling point for a school like ours in a very competitive market of independent private schools. When our potential students and their families come in and see Microsoft IT Academy and know there is an MTA program, they say this is where they want to be."
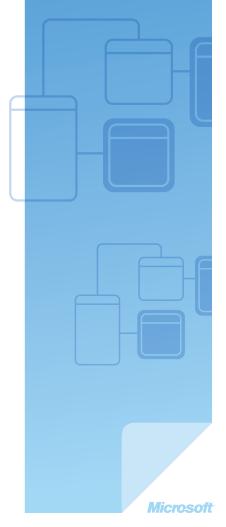
La Salle also adopted MeasureUp practice exams and preparation materials to get students ready for the MTA exams. "MeasureUp offers the students an opportunity to see how they are doing as they progress through these courses," said Coggins. "They get instant feedback that helps them to make better decisions in the future and also teaches them all along the way."

La Salle students boast an excellent pass rate on MTA exams, and approximately 200 students per year participate in the program. MTA also leads to higher certifications, with about 15 La Salle students earning their MCTS certification each year.

Marchese is thrilled with the results of incorporating MTA exams, and says La Salle is the place to go for students who want to develop technology skills. "The MTA certification program has really legitimized what we are doing here in our technology program, and it puts our students at the front of the pack."

Opportunities to thrive in IT:

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– **Nicholas Coggins,** Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, La Salle College High School

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