

High-Tech School Plugs into *StudySync* for Content and Student Engagement



SUCCESS STORY

ABOUT THE SCHOOL



Name
Robert C. Fisler School

Location
Fullerton, CA

Enrollment
960

Overview

Robert C. Fisler School is one of two K-8 schools, and one of five schools with middle school-aged students in the suburban Fullerton School District in Orange County, California. Fisler serves approximately 960 students. Second through eighth grade students participate in the school's 1:1 laptop program. This high-tech program has been in place since the school opened in August 2004.

Wired for success

During the school facility-planning phase, community feedback recommended students in second through eighth grades be equipped with laptops. Alongside laptops, students interact with online textbooks and digital assignments as part of the learning environment.

Over the past 10 years, laptops have made way for iPads. The school remains tech-focused as it implements the rigorous Common Core State Standards. As a largely suburban school district with dramatic disparities in household income, there are challenges to maintaining equality in building technology investments and student access to tech-enhanced learning opportunities.

Elizabeth Ellison is an eighth grade English Language Arts and English Language Essentials teacher. She has worked in the Fullerton School District for 21 years and has been at Fisler since it opened its doors. She discovered the *StudySync* ELA digital curriculum and wanted to add it to her classroom right away.

Ellison learned about *StudySync* from her colleagues using the program already. She felt confident about the potential of *StudySync* for her students given its robust multi-media library containing hundreds of texts and excerpts; Common Core aligned instruction in reading, writing, listening and speaking; differentiation resources; and assessment tools to ensure student readiness for key high-stakes assessments, college, and career.

During the 2012-2013 school year, Ellison incorporated *StudySync* into her classroom as a trial. Several other Fullerton School District middle school teachers did the same. Now Ellison uses *StudySync* in her classroom every day. Seventh and eighth graders across the whole district are using *StudySync*'s core literacy program.

“The big thing is having access to so many great excerpts of literature,” Ellison said. “We have immediate access to current and classic works. It’s scary-easy planning.”

Ellison believes that *StudySync* lessons and units ensure engaging digital learning aligned to the Common Core, giving teachers the ability to always create relevant, Common Core-aligned assignments through a user-friendly platform.

“It’s phenomenal,” Ellison said. “If everyone had *StudySync*, they’d have a Common Core ELA textbook.”

Meeting the digital needs of a high-tech district

Although Fisler has been wired for online learning since established, that is not necessarily the case for other schools in the Fullerton School District using *StudySync*.

In fact, Nicolas Junior High School followed Fisler by adopting *StudySync*, although still transitioning to a 1:1 laptop program. Students have experienced literacy gains as well. After seeing the success of students at Fisler and

Nicholas, other schools in the Fullerton School District adopted and incorporated *StudySync* regardless of where they were in their digital transition process.

Streamlined lesson planning with extensive *StudySync* resources

Varied access to technology and digital resources across the district over the last 10 years left Ellison and other Fullerton educators constantly searching the web to plan and assemble their lessons to make sure they had what they needed to be effective educators.

More specifically, before *StudySync*, Ellison’s process included finding a text to meet her lesson plan, locating the perfect excerpt, and searching for any interesting videos or audio to go along with it. Next, Ellison vetted her selections to ensure the copyrights were in order.

Then, after developing a class discussion, Ellison hoped the school’s aggressive Internet filter would not interfere. Ellison recalls when her class was in the middle of *The Call of the Wild*, accessed through another online library. During a crucial literary moment, Ellison learned a whole chapter was unexpectedly blocked. These challenges faced by Ellison and other teachers in the most technologically driven school in the district made teaching media-rich lessons difficult.

Enrollment

82.5%

Asian/Pacific Islander

7.9%

Caucasian

5.6%

Hispanic

.4%

African American



The *StudySync* digital library provides texts and lesson plans, making it easy for teachers to keep pace within a high-tech classroom. Texts can be sorted by grade level, Lexile® level, Common Core recommendation, genre, title, author or keyword to streamline lesson planning. Additionally, *StudySync* can be accessed whenever and wherever including *StudySync*® TV lessons like that accompanying *The Call of the Wild*.

For Ellison, instead of experiencing blocked content from other online sources, she provides her students more cohesive, meaningful learning experiences using *StudySync*.

Schools throughout the district with fewer technological enhancements than Fisler, successfully implemented *StudySync*. By creating a thoughtful technology implementation plan, the school successfully leveraged *StudySync* at least once a week in honors, remediation, and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) classrooms for assignments and creative class discussions.

Customized curricula to meet student achievement levels

Although more than 91 percent of students at Fisler scored at or above proficient on the California State Assessment for English Language Arts, Ellison's high-performing students still learn at different levels and paces.

One student in Ellison's classroom has visual and audio processing challenges. These learning needs led to behavior problems; however, with *StudySync*, the student annotated as he read lessons, researched concepts, participated in classroom discussions, and used video and audio enhancements to work through material at his own pace. *StudySync* helped him become a more productive learner.

The phases of learning in *StudySync*, from First Read to Close Read to peer-review work, reinforce literacy skills and concepts, and provide opportunities to scaffold assignments based on students' interests and reading abilities. Lessons can be tailored and assigned to a whole class, a small group, or an individual student.

Fisler School Benchmark Assessments before and after *StudySync* lesson use

LITERACY PROGRESS BEFORE STUDYSYNC		LITERACY PROGRESS AFTER STUDYSYNC	
STUDENTS AT GRADE LEVEL	26 Students	68 Students	161% Increase
ADEQUATE PROGRESS	33 Students	31 Students	6% Decrease
LIMITED PROGRESS	27 Students	6 Students	78% Decrease
MINIMAL PROGRESS	20 Students	1 Student	95% Decrease

Early in her adoption, Ellison saw results. “I was just reviewing our latest benchmark results. I am very pleased,” said Ellison. Prior to using the *StudySync* Thematic Unit on Suspense with her class, 26 of her students tested at grade level. After completing the unit, 68 students tested at grade level. Similarly, 19 students who had previously tested at minimal progress improved their test results.

“The students can immerse themselves in the whole process in a more meaningful way than if it was just a textbook, notes, and then answering the questions on a test.”

—Elizabeth Ellison
Teacher, English Language Arts

“They have been so completely engaged with the Suspense Unit, they are making connections to other reading selections and they are using what they have learned in other classes,” said Ellison.

Improvements in the art of conversation in Language Arts class

Ellison believes the biggest improvement for all of her students is a deeper understanding of different types of literature — including poetry, classic and contemporary novels, and informational texts — alongside more meaningful classroom conversations.

Ellison compared class discussions before *StudySync* to “lobbing a wet tennis ball.” One student would make a point, then, another student would make a different point.”

“Nothing bounced,” she said, “but they thought they were having discussions. Generating a running conversation was difficult.”

After using *StudySync TV* with its modeling of student-led academic discussions and additional *StudySync* multi-media resources, Ellison reported that her students are engaged and excited to participate more fully in class. They also have learned how to listen and better participate in an academic discussion on a topic.

“They have read and re-read such a great selection of texts and have become so confident in their abilities. They use literary terms and apply them because they have seen it modeled so well in *StudySync* by students they can relate to,” said Ellison.