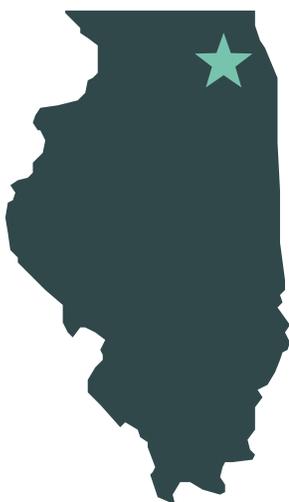




Success Story

StudySync[®] Empowers Geneva High School ELA Students

With Authentic Feedback And Peer Modeling



Geneva, Illinois

Overview

Geneva High School is located in Geneva, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. A high-achieving school, Geneva High School serves over 2,000 students with an average graduation rate of 99 percent.

This year, Geneva High School classrooms went 1:1 with every student now using either a Lenovo[®] ThinkPad or HP[®] Notebook computer at home and at school. This shift has gone hand in hand with the school's use of digital software solutions, including *StudySync*, a core English language arts program that encourages students to uncover their passion for reading and writing.

Implementation

Kate Hertz has been teaching English at Geneva High School for 18 years, and she has been using *StudySync* since the fall of 2013.

“I noticed my students were becoming more insular and not having the engaging conversations that I would have liked,” recalls Hertz. “I started looking at software solutions that would encourage more interaction.”

While exploring online, Hertz stumbled on a series of videos posted to a digital curriculum resources website that featured students talking about literature.

“The students in the videos were having extremely intelligent conversations about literature, and I was intrigued,” she says. “I realized there was one company behind all of the videos, and it was *StudySync*. I asked our Curriculum Superintendent if I could try it out, and she got me a pilot.”

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English Teacher, Geneva High School

During the pilot, Hertz found that she loved the peer-editing capabilities and multimedia features of *StudySync* that really engaged her students in the content. Not only did she continue to use *StudySync*, but she got others onboard, including one teacher who did not consider herself tech-savvy.

“She loved it,” recalls Hertz, “and she was surprised by how easily she was able to use it with her students. That’s because the learning objectives hadn’t changed. *StudySync* simply changes the way we do what we do.”

Student Engagement

Hertz currently teaches three periods a day, including two Advanced Placement®* classes and one study seminar for students who need extra support.

“I’ve used *StudySync* with AP®* students, struggling students and everything in between, and I find it gives all of them more control over their reading and writing skills,” says Hertz.

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The key, she believes, is the ability for her students to give authentic feedback through anonymous peer reviews on writing assignments and social media-style Blasts that encourage students to form and share opinions.

Hertz’s students have told her they enjoy the Blasts because they get to hear different perspectives and views from their peers, they appreciate the constructive criticism without having to know who said it, and that they’ve become better readers and writers based on that feedback.

Hertz believes that is because peer-feedback teaches students to write with the reader in mind. She also notes that *StudySync* gets kids focused on discussion right away, which brings her class to life.

“*StudySync* also offers videos that model academic discussion called *StudySync® TV*,” says Hertz. “My kids sometimes see it as corny and scripted, and they’ll say to me, ‘Those kids have such smart discussions, we would never sound like that.’ Then they mimic the video, and the next thing you know they do sound like that! That’s not just engaging, but also empowering for them.”

Results

Hertz has noticed a measurable difference in her own classroom when she has used *StudySync* for one unit but not another.

“I finished teaching a unit on Medieval literature without *StudySync*, and then I did a full unit on *Macbeth* using *StudySync* core materials,” she says. “I did this with a mix of students, from individualized education students to on-level and advanced, and they all improved. In fact, their test scores improved a full 10 percent over the previous unit. The only major instructional variable was *StudySync*.”

Hertz notes that *StudySync* includes extensive resources and flexibility, so educators can easily craft a curriculum that reflects their own teaching style.

“Everyone is different, so while some will appreciate the more prescriptive path, others may love the ability to use the library as a resource bank that allows them to be more autonomous. The first year I used it, I did five or six assignments, but even if you only do one, it can be valuable.”

The Future

Hertz says that her school will continue to use *StudySync* to engage students in literature, reading and writing because the administration believes in it, and so does she.

“It’s a gradual process as more of our teachers get used to screens in their classrooms,” she says. “There are a lot of resources in *StudySync*. After four years of using it, I’m still getting used to the learning impact a platform as powerful and engaging as *StudySync* can have.”

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Hertz has confidence that *StudySync* will continue to be well-received, because of the level of support that is provided.

“They are always making updates that improve the program, and the support is unparalleled,” says Hertz. “When we make recommendations, it isn’t years but rather just weeks or months before we see the changes. It’s a reciprocal dialogue in which our school is able to help shape and mold the program.”

About *StudySync*[®]

StudySync is a flexible, literature-rich ELA/EL core curriculum that continually evolves to meet the changing expectations of grade 6–12 educators, students, and standards. *StudySync* offers richer, more dynamic, and more targeted content that enables teachers to bring their passion for literature and great writing to life. Age-appropriate content, engaging multimedia and flexible features make lessons more accessible, so every student can cultivate a love for literature.



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