



IES Rosario de Acuña:

Generating student and teacher productivity with a Microsoft server-based learning platform

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Overview

Country: Spain

Industry: Education

School Profile

IES Rosario de Acuña is a public, secondary school based in Gijón, Spain. The school is located in the Spanish Principality of Asturias and offers general education classes to its students who range in ages from 12-17 years old.

Situation

Student and teacher productivity was being compromised by an antiquated and disorganized learning environment. Also, teachers and administrators had no easy way to track student progress and performance.

Solution

In conjunction with the Central Educational Ministry of Asturias, the school deployed Microsoft Class Server, an educational technology platform.

Benefits

- Accelerated student and teacher productivity

“Prior to our deployment of the Microsoft educational platform our information resources suffered from disorganization. Students had difficulty locating important documents and teachers struggled to organize course materials and monitor the progress of students. Since the deployment, these problems have been resolved, and our student and teacher populations are more productive than ever.”

- Pablo Huerga Melcón, Coordinator of ICT – IES Rosario de Acuña

Situation:

IES Rosario de Acuña (IES) is a publicly funded secondary school located in Gijón, Spain. IES offers general education classes to students ranging from 12-17 years of age. Gijón is home to 300,000 people and is located in the Northern Spanish Principality of Asturias.

In 2004 IES became the first publicly supported school in its district to deploy a Microsoft educational platform when it rolled out Microsoft Class Server. Prior to the deployment the school was struggling with a variety of issues including:

- Disorganization resulting from an explosion of information
- Cumbersome, paper intensive teaching processes
- No coherent solution to track student progress

The overall state of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) at IES was in need of improvement. One area where this pain was acutely felt was in information management. Teachers relied upon a Windows Server-based file server to store, reuse and share lessons with colleagues. The same file server solution was used for organizing student exams,



papers, and information. Although the file server was functional, information was not stored in a coordinated and organized fashion and there was not native search capability.

The rapid growth in popularity and usefulness of the Internet magnified this problem. Both teachers and students were increasingly relying upon it. Teachers found useful content to augment lessons and students used the Internet to research assignments and develop new skills and competencies.

But, IES had no coordinated platform for storage and managed reuse of these valuable resources. As a result, teachers were forced to develop their own solutions for lesson reuse, and information sharing between teachers occurred on an ad-hoc basis.

In addition, the school had no coherent solution for tracking student progress. Teachers most often tracked student performance manually, in grading ledgers. While this had been a serviceable solution for many years, IES felt there was plenty of room for improvement. First of all, this data existed in many "islands" around the school and teachers were unable to easily see if a student was struggling in a particular class or if there was a broader learning problem.

Secondly, tracking student progress in grading ledgers is a time-intensive and manual process. Papers needed to be collected by hand, marked up, graded, and then returned to students. At the end of the term, teachers were required to spend a lot of time tallying the performance of individual students to determine final grades.

Pablo Huerga, the ICT Coordinator for IES, knew there was an opportunity to improve the school's operations as well as the effectiveness of student learning. As Mr. Huerga weighed the issues the schools faced – overall disorganization, lack of information management resources, and an informal and time intensive student tracking system – he concluded that a deployment of a Microsoft educational platform had the potential to solve all of these problems.



Solution:

Mr. Huerga enlisted the support of the Central Educational Ministry of Asturias for the original Microsoft Class Server deployment. In fact, to this day from its main office in Oviedo, Spain, the Ministry manages the server supporting the solution. Whilst Class Server has been phased out, new software from Microsoft - SharePoint Learning Kit (SLK) - can be used as a key component in a SharePoint based Learning Management system.

SLK has been designed to work with Microsoft's SharePoint-based Learning Gateway. Learning Gateway is a Web-based collaboration, communications, and content delivery framework tailored for the education system. It enables teachers to manage their administrative workload, empowers students to learn at their own pace, and helps parents become more involved in their children's education. Users can manage their schedules and tasks from a single web-based portal and also initiate more complex tasks specific to their role.

For instance, students receive and submit assignments from a variety of classes. Teachers distribute, receive and grade student work from their space. And administrators can use the solution to distribute parental permission forms.

At IES, students and teachers use the platform's repository capabilities to store a variety of content including:

- Microsoft Office files such as PowerPoint presentations and Word documents
- .ZIP files
- .PDF files
- Multimedia files such as videos, images, and audio

The adoption of the Microsoft solution at IES has been very encouraging. When it was first launched for the 2004-2005 school year, the solution was used by 8 teachers and 22 students across a total of 17 classes. Today, the solution is used by 52 teachers and each and every one of the more than 700 students at IES. In total, the Microsoft educational platform is used across a total of 64 classes at the secondary school.



In conjunction with his colleagues, Mr. Huerga has developed 16 separate tutorials that demonstrate various capabilities of the technology. Teachers use these tutorials to improve their skills on the Microsoft platform.

Benefits:

The Microsoft educational platform has positively impacted the daily activities of the school's students and teachers.

Impact on Student Activities

Prior to the Microsoft solution, a student's resources were limited to textbooks and paper. Students would push themselves to copy a teacher's lesson from the chalkboard, but sometimes they would have trouble keeping up or miss an important concept. Overall, lessons were not as interactive and interesting as they had the potential to be.

Now with Class Server the students are exposed to high-quality, multi-media learning resources. Successful lessons that capture the attention of students are easily shared and reused by teachers. And teachers are more often integrating the World Wide Web in lesson presentation by directly linking to useful information

Also, each student has his or her own personal, dedicated, server-based work space. Mr. Huerga believes that the students have found this to be, "incredibly motivating." Students now feel that they have clearer insight into what is expected of them and how they are performing. Students can also now move at their own pace and easily advance to the next assignment from their work space whenever they are ready.

Mr. Huerga believes this form of self-directed learning has improved student learning at IES. "No matter what the child's learning style is, no child is left behind thanks to this innovative new learning solution. If a student is having trouble with a particular lesson or concept, they can easily review the content at their convenience. Our students love this new method of learning."

Impact on Teacher Activities

The solution's impact on teacher activities has been three-fold:



- Improved administrative efficiency
- Detailed tracking of student performance that has enabled better identification and support for under-performing students
- Development of interesting new lessons

The majority of teachers at IES are using the learning platform to collect assignments, distribute grades, and provide student feedback. This has reduced the administrative burden of a number of typical teacher activities such as distributing and collecting assignments, tabulating grades in ledgers, and providing feedback on student performance.

By keeping student performance data in a central repository, teachers are more easily able to monitor and track student progress. The Microsoft learning platform provides detailed reports on student performance, and students who are struggling are highlighted and easily identified. Mr. Huerga explains the value of this capability, "By improving a teacher's ability to track student performance, our teacher's can proactively address problem situations as they begin to develop – preventing a student from slipping through the cracks. In summary, our teachers are spending less time on administrative activities yet are more productive in these activities than ever before."

By reducing administrative requirements, teachers are able to spend more time on developing interesting new lessons supported by the Microsoft platform. Many of the new lessons embrace multi-media technologies such video and audio capabilities enabled by the integration of Information and Communications Technologies in the classroom.

All of the new lessons are stored to the Microsoft platform where they can easily be shared and updated by teachers and administrators. Already, the teachers have combined to create over 350 lessons which have been stored to the Microsoft platform for reuse – and every year, more and more of lessons are being created. The success of the Microsoft learning platform at IES has been so significant, that the solution is in the process of being replicated at 4 other schools in the principality of Asturias.



Summary:

The days of “chaos and disorganization” at IES have been replaced with a well-thought out, coordinated solution that has dramatically improved the productivity and effectiveness of students and teachers at IES. The activities of both students and teachers are better supported with the new technology solution – and a central repository for valuable lessons has been created and will be used for many years to come.