Vision in the Business Classroom Puts Small Missouri High School in the Big Leagues

Learn how a high school teacher streamlined teaching business and computer applications classes, moved to a paperless curriculum and now efficiently manages his classroom in this case study of the use of classroom management technology at Orrick High School.

> Orrick High School is located in Orrick, Mo., a rural, heavily agricultural town east of Kansas City. The district has one elementary and one junior/senior high school, serving a student population of 450.

As technology has become more essential and sophisticated, schools are expected to stay abreast of innovations. While states and districts do their best to keep schools supplied with enough computers and the best available software, it's up to teachers to take full advantage of these tools for the greatest benefit of the students. At Orrick High School in tiny Orrick, Mo., business teacher A. Jaret Tomlinson has worked hard to incorporate Vision™ classroom management software into all aspects of teaching and learning.

Orrick is a rural community of fewer than 900 residents, located approximately 25 miles east of Kansas City. Only 450 students are enrolled in the school district. Orrick Junior/Senior High School serves 230 students, all of whom will pass through Tomlinson's classroom for required courses such as Keyboarding I and sophomore Introduction to Business. Given the different classes he teaches, Tomlinson was determined to maximize the available technology to streamline his teaching and efficiently manage his classroom. "It's one thing to have technology in the room; it's a whole other thing to incorporate it seamlessly into the curriculum so that students benefit," he said. "Vision is the single most important piece of software I have in my room. I don't know of any other software that allows me to demonstrate for the students, model a task right in front of them, or take one student's work and show it to the other students."

Managing Students a Priority

Tomlinson was initially attracted to Vision because of the Surf-Lock plug-in. "The computer lab teacher and I were both looking for ways to help monitor student work and limit their exposure to the Internet, so Surf-Lock was pivotal for us," he said. "We wanted to find something that would help us monitor what students were doing, but that we could also use as a tool, instead of a projector. Vision met all of our requirements."

With Vision, Tomlinson's classroom management style has changed. "Putting kids on the Internet gives a teacher more to manage. The kids are smart; they have these proxy workarounds where they can circumvent the firewall," he said. "Vision helps me to hold them accountable. I can have a little snapshot and see what everyone's looking at. I can send a chat message to tell them to get back on task, or stand next to them."

The installation of Vision has made it easier to enforce the district's Internet acceptable use policy. "If they violate the Internet agreement,

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CASE STUDY: VISION

they can lose computer privileges, or even serve disciplinary time. They can't even sign on to the computer, which makes it tough for them to practice the keyboarding exercises."

Conversely, it makes it easier to reward studiousness. "As kids finish a lesson, they often want to go on the Internet to do some other work," Tomlinson said. "I can open up their computer without opening all the others. It's a good reward to allow students to have some time if they complete their work early."

Transforming the Teaching Process
Now that monitoring issues have been resolved, Tomlinson's time is freed up to focus on teaching. "Now I can really focus on the grade level expectations that the state requires," he said. "It's much easier to meet the technology goals and standards for our school curriculum by

ensuring that each student is both exposed to and proficient in computer skills."

When Tomlinson installed Vision in 2005, it was part of a state grant-funded update of his business classroom, replacing typewriters with 24 computer workstations. His goal was to create a technology-driven classroom that would truly prepare his students for the world of business. That goal has been met with an infrastructure that benefits both his teaching methods and his students' needs. Students access the computers and Internet more frequently, whether for word processing or research. With the help of Vision, Tomlinson has been able to streamline his business math class, to the point where he has set up a paperless curriculum.

"I think the most important component of Vision is it's really a tool that allows you to get what you want out of classroom technology," Tomlinson said. "It's not a cookie-cutter program that only allows you to do one thing. It's so customizable and easily mixed into your curriculum and your lessons that you can get as much or as little out of it as you want, depending on what your goals are. I will continue to build on the functionality it offers."

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