Vision6 Keeps Montana Students Focused on Learning

There is a truth universally acknowledged, that students in a classroom are easily distracted. Regardless of a school district's size, location or wealth, the challenge remains the same – keep students focused on learning. The challenge has increased tenfold as computer use has become integrated into the classroom. "The computer screen, when it's under a student's control, is like a magnet that completely absorbs energy. Trying to compete with that is a tough sell," said Daniel Gould, a middle school language arts teacher in Whitefish, Mont.

Determined to provide the best technology possible to its students and the best tools available to its teachers, the Whitefish Public School District invested in a district-wide license for Vision® in 2000. Whitefish, a small town of 10,000 residents, is best known as the home of some of the country's most beautiful recreation areas, including Glacier National Park and Big Mountain ski resort. The district serves 2,000 students in four schools, all of which are now using Vision software.

> **Whitefish Public School District is located in Whitefish, Mont., in an area famous for its natural beauty and ski resorts. The district has four schools serving a student population of 2,000.**

Keeping Class Time for Learning

"We started with Vision at the high school, and it worked so well we wanted to implement it in our other buildings," said Chris Deister, district technology director.

"Once you've used Vision, it's hard to imagine living without it."

Vision is easy-to-use classroom management software that empowers teachers and trainers to supervise and control student computer activity from the instructor's computer screen. It has made it easier for teachers to convey their lessons to the students, which leads to more efficient use of time in the classroom. "There's less time needed in classroom preparation before teachers bring their class to the computer lab," said Tim Mahoney, the district's network technician. "Instead of having to go over everything first, they can show what they want right away. The technology helps them do it much more efficiently."

Gould agrees. "I found it very frustrating to teach the students in the lab at their own computers, because their attention was so focused on their own screen and mouse that they certainly weren't listening very carefully," he said. "A concept would have to be re-taught multiple times. Now with Vision, I can share my screen, and their attention is 100 percent on the lesson because I have their keyboards and mice locked out while I go over the steps." Now Gould, using Vision's demo feature, locks and unlocks the computers multiple times during a class, first demonstrating a concept, then watching while students try it themselves. "Once you've used Vision, it's hard to imagine living without it."

Effectively Teaching Applications

Using Vision, Gould has found it easier to teach computer applications to his seventh- and eighth-grade students. "Students understand complex, computer-related instruction much better because it's right in front of them on their own screens. They see it, then they do it," he said.

"Students learn best when a task is broken down," Gould explained. "Vision allows an entire lesson to be broken down into chunks that are easily assimilated because with the instant release of the student computers, they are immediately practicing a specific task or skill that has just been modeled by the teacher. This helps me avoid overloading them with too many steps in a complicated lesson all at once."

One project his students enjoy as part of their study of Greek mythology is the creation of a Greek newspaper with mythology-based articles. Students write the articles, find appropriate illustrations in books or on the Internet, then lay out the newspaper in Microsoft Publisher. With Vision, Gould can teach his classes the basics of Publisher in a fraction of the time it used to take. "It used to take hours of lesson time to teach the basics of the program," he recalled. "With Vision, I can show them enough in a 10-minute demo to get started. Over the next few days, I can show other features such as overflow, inserting graphics or pictures, or changing page and column widths."

Benefits of Using Vision

- **Provides teachers with efficient teaching and classroom management tools**

- **Facilitates student learning by providing visual models to follow**

- **Keeps students focused and on task**

- **Improves student retention of concepts; results in less re-teaching**

Most gratifying is that students seem to better retain information, so there's less re-teaching of computer applications during the school year. "The students remember how to use particular features of a program with a quick refresher," Gould said. "Their retention is better, so the amount of time struggling with the program is reduced, and they can get their work done. Vision helps make other kinds of software more transparent and easier to deal with."

Essential for Students of All Ages

In addition to fulfilling its K-12 mission, the Whitefish school district offers extensive adult education courses. Gould teaches several adult classes and finds that Vision is equally beneficial when working with older students. "I teach beginning digital photography and beginning Publisher, FrontPage, etc., and I notice the same thing with adults, especially older adults," he said. "When they see it on the screen, then have the screen back in their command, they can figure out the program and

it's less intimidating. Direct modeling is a pretty powerful tool."

Vision has proven a cost-effective way to help teachers show materials to the students. "Before Vision, teachers really had no good way to share what they were doing with students other than projector units, which were very expensive," said Deister. "Vision provides a good way to share what's happening on the teacher's screen. That was our main objective."

Mahoney agreed, noting the impact of the district's upgrade to Vision6. "I think it's an essential product for an educational environment, and it's cost-effective," he said. "Vision6 also changes the paradigm of

"Vision is one of the things we could never take away because the teachers rely on it,"

how the product works. It allows teachers to change which computers they control, as well as which master console controls particular computers. It really enhances the functionality of the product for us."

"Vision is one of the things we could never take away because the teachers rely on it," said Deister. "We're finding more ways to use it and places to put it all the time."

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