

Blackboard Collaborate Helps K12 Realize the Promise of Technology-enabled, Individualized Learning

More than a decade into the 21st century, one of the most tragic failures of American education is that nearly one quarter of its students never graduate from high school. But one innovative online education company, K12 Inc., is working hard—in conjunction with Blackboard Collaborate—to improve that statistic.

And they are doing it in a big way. To date, K12's award-winning curriculum and services, which rely heavily on Blackboard Collaborate, have been used by almost 500,000 students in 85 countries and 6 continents.

K12 Offers Broad Range of Options to All Students

The nation's leading provider of technology-powered, individualized education solutions for students in prekindergarten through high school, K12 provides states, districts, and schools the ability to offer students the broadest array of options for learning in a flexible, individualized, and innovative way. K12 provides online curricula, technology, and academic services to public and private schools and districts, traditional classrooms, blended school programs, and directly to families.

Not a one-size-fits-all education system, K12 strives to develop each child's full potential with engaging, individualized learning. Perhaps their biggest fans are parents seeking to tap into their children's unique potential and who have seen what can happen when children can work at the right pace and with the tools, approaches, and content that make learning come alive.



Through extensive investment in advancing adaptive learning technology, developing engaging interactive lessons, and improving online teaching practices, our mission is to see the promise of individualized learning fulfilled—and we will not rest until the dream of a great education for every child becomes a reality.

Ronald J. Packard
CEO, K12 Inc.
2013 K12 Academic Report



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Cindy Cook
Director
School Operations, K12 Inc.

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Blackboard Collaborate Replicates Face-to-Face Classroom

An integral part of the K12 instructional model, Blackboard Collaborate is used extensively by teachers, teacher assistants, learning coaches, family support coaches, advisors, administrators, parents, and, of course, students. Total usage statistics for Blackboard Collaborate are more than impressive:

- **Total virtual classrooms:** 96,393
- **Unique Attendees:** 888,459
- **Concurrent Attendees:** 12,062
- **Session recordings:** 34,935

For K-8 classes, Blackboard Collaborate is used for math, language arts, science, music, foreign languages, and even online physical education. High school students focus on standard course offerings, adding forensic science, programming, and digital design. In the private sector, kids reach out internationally, and teachers work on curricula with others across the country—all via Blackboard Collaborate.

“Kids from different states can be gathered in an online class. We provide students with national clubs for activities like chess and advanced learning programs in which they talk about relevant topics such as global warming or local events,” says Allison Dracha, Academic Services.

The synchronous online component has grown with the needs of the students, who want the biggest bang for their buck. Learners come to K12 with a requirement for a broad range of learning options, anytime, anyplace. So the organization needed to adopt a formal mechanism for kids and teachers getting together, with documented evidence of instruction, like recordings.

“I was talking with our hosting team last week about reporting,” explains Cindy Cook, Director, School Operations. “They took a look and said ‘well, right now we have 54,000 students logged into Collaborate.’ Blackboard Collaborate enables us to bring the best of engagement in a face-to-face setting to life in a virtual environment. We're geared predominantly toward the education space, and Collaborate has allowed us to basically replicate the ways we engage students and create relationships. It helps us connect.”

National Math Lab Provides Extra Help

K12 created a national math lab open to all virtual academies across the country for students who meet certain criteria. Aimed at addressing student's weaknesses in math, the innovative program enables students to concentrate on the curriculum while providing an opportunity to focus on essential topics they might not understand. After eight weeks of live, online instruction, in tandem with their traditional math curriculum, students are tested to measure their gains in that area.

"The feedback has been overwhelming positive," says Guadalupe Vander Ploeg, Director, Academic Services. "We continually hear from teachers and parents that students are enjoying the program with its flexibility, additional support, and real-time collaboration with other students. The teachers make it focused and fun at the same time."

"I remember trying to teach math over the phone before Blackboard Collaborate," Dracha says. "The fluidity Collaborate brings to instruction is priceless. You see the transformation students go through when coming from an environment when they were bullied to one where they can start fresh. You hear from parents that they love school. Those touch my heart the most."

Equal Opportunity Learning

At K12, everyone has a fair shot, especially students who have been bullied, those in military families who travel, kids participating in professional sports and other activities whose time is limited, those with disabilities, some who are hospitalized, and others who are advanced learners. Blackboard Collaborate creates an environment where children love school again. As one student says, "No one cares what I am wearing to school today."

"A very high percentage of our classes use Blackboard Collaborate," concludes Dracha. "We look at improving our high school course passing rate, graduation rate, college matriculation rate, and student enrollments. Once we get them, they tend to return."



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Allison Dracha
Academic Services
K12 Inc.



COUNT THE WAYS K12 USES BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE

- One-on-one for honing in on specific skills
- Small group sessions to confirm content mastery and identify gaps
- Classes that include those for special education, credit recovery
- Homeroom for non-curriculum-centered activities to build community
- School-wide assemblies for as many as 10,000 attendees
- Online physical education, including personal activity journals
- Clubs on both school and national levels for shared interests, like chess
- Nation-wide career and college fairs, summer camps
- Family support and parental involvement
- Staff and board meetings with local school governing body
- Professional development and onboarding for instructors and staff

Multifaceted Professional Development

K12 delivers professional development for teachers, school counselors, student support services staff, and school administrators. Both synchronous and asynchronous content in more than 30 curriculums are deployed in various training paths according to local state needs. But the overarching themes of virtual instruction, online tools, relationships, and communication are consistent across K12.

On a national level, ongoing synchronous training for teachers and school counselors emphasizes leadership development, quality online teaching, and professional learning communities. The real-time interaction affords participants opportunities to share promising practices currently in use while extending the learning community to other experts in the field of learning sciences.



The exponential increase in online learning in both regular and virtual classrooms is driving the need to incorporate new pedagogical content knowledge and strategies in pre-service and in-service teacher education. Compared to many countries, the United States is behind in preparing K-12 teachers to teach online. Very few teacher education programs in the U.S. offer a curriculum for online teaching, leaving districts, states and virtual schools to train online teachers.

Susan Patrick and Lisa Dawley
*K-12 Online-Blended Learning and Virtual Schools.
Redefining Teacher Education for Digital-Age
Learners Summit Paper*



For more information about how K12, Inc. is leading the transformation from traditional face-to-face education to technology-enabled, individualized learning, download the 2013 K12 Academic Report.

