

## Enabling Collaborative Curriculum for Student Achievement

“Blackboard has opened a whole new world for our teachers, parents and students. Accountability and high levels of student achievement are at the core of public education, and it is important that we have tools in place to help us reach all children in many different ways. Blackboard has allowed everyone in our district to work as a team to help all students succeed.”

– Rod Schroder, Superintendent at Amarillo Independent School District

### A Strong Start Made Even Stronger

In 2003, before using Blackboard® software, the Amarillo Independent School District (AISD) began organizing their state-mandated curriculum into a document called AISD Standards 1.0. It was created by more than 650 teachers, organized in teams representing every grade level and each of the core content areas. The goal was to provide the district’s teachers with a blueprint for what topics should be taught during each of the school year’s grading periods. The usefulness of the standards document quickly expanded as AISD realized it was a perfect repository for lesson plans and teaching resources. Upon practical application, AISD decided the document would be most effective if it were a “living article” that could be updated throughout the school year to reflect new resources and objectives.

By leveraging the Blackboard Content System™, AISD created their new Curriculum Standards 2.0 Platform. With it, they have met the challenge of developing a quality, aligned curriculum in a living document format. The 2.0 Platform is a dynamic incarnation of the previous static document, allowing teachers and support staff to update, expand and improve their curriculum any time. “The Blackboard Content System enables teachers to access the materials they need to be successful,” states Dirk Funk, Instructional Technology Facilitator. “In the past, access to our curriculum standards and instructional resources was quite limited. By hosting them via Blackboard technology, teachers now have access to them anywhere they have an Internet connection. The end result is improved student performance.”



### Amarillo Independent School District

- + Public School district in Amarillo, Texas
- + 29,166 Students
- + 2,072 Teachers
- + Student Information System: Skyward
- + Client Since 2003
- + Website: [www.amaisd.org](http://www.amaisd.org)

## A Potent Force in Curriculum Development

Collaboration in AISD has become a stronger influence in curriculum development with educators now directly involved in sharing best practices across the school district. Amarillo Superintendent, Rod Schroder explains, "Blackboard software has facilitated so many things in AISD other than just our online school. It has allowed our teachers to communicate with each other in ways that were never possible before. With this capability, our teachers are able to collaborate, plan lessons and develop and align curriculum whether they teach at the same campus or not. They have been able to receive training through the use of Blackboard technology which allows best practices for teaching and learning to spread across the district more quickly. They are also able to work with students differently and communicate with parents about their children's school work."

The general public can now access AISD's Curriculum Standards 2.0 Platform, so parents can review what their children are studying, and when. A common, user-friendly Blackboard portal allows Amarillo's teachers, staff and parents quick, intuitive access to the expanding curriculum. Blackboard's advanced access control features ensure copyrighted materials, such as those purchased from outside content providers, are accessible only through passwords created for the authorized educator(s).

## Dreaming in Blackboard

As AISD's teachers and staff have become familiar with Blackboard's environment, they have discovered new and innovative ways to communicate with each other and their students, and to improve their overall pedagogy. The first innovation was a forum for online book study, featuring threaded discussions and synchronous chat sessions. From there, a reinvigorated focus on staff literacy development led to the publication of teacher writings using Blackboard's Portfolio tools. Publication of student work on the system soon followed. AISD now uses this collaborative hub to distribute conference notes, presentations and the District Literacy Plan. Other content

"Blackboard serves as the only platform for all of our district's online classes. The more I learn about Blackboard, the more I realize it's capabilities to expand, enhance and enrich our online curriculum. We currently have eight online courses, all developed in Blackboard. We look forward to adding new courses in the future. The sky's the limit!"

Karen Tomlinson,  
*Online School Administrator  
Amarillo Independent School District*

shared district-wide includes appendices, glossaries, resource folders, content area vocabulary, Web links and textbook alignment sheets. Ginny Albertson, a math teacher for AISD, responded to the Blackboard training by saying, "I no longer dream in color. I dream in Blackboard."

AISD is constantly looking to the future and how they can maximize Blackboard technology to improve their teaching methods. On deck are plans to associate specific learning objectives with streaming video content, adding yet another option for teachers seeking to link class content and external resources. They are also in the process of forming teams of teachers to develop model lesson plans. In addition, AISD will address the recent additions to Texas' state-wide graduation requirements by placing required courses online. This will save time for teachers and allow students to meet graduation requirements in less time, while simultaneously

reducing the strain on district facilities. AISD intends to grow their partnership with Blackboard to aid ongoing, district-wide improvements, continuing to transform the teaching and learning experience in Amarillo. streaming video content, adding yet another option for teachers seeking to link class content and external resources. They are also in the process of forming teams of teachers to develop model lesson plans. In addition, AISD will address the recent additions to Texas' state-wide graduation requirements by placing required courses online. This will save time for teachers and allow students to meet graduation requirements in less time, while simultaneously reducing the strain on district facilities. AISD intends to grow their partnership with Blackboard to aid ongoing, district-wide improvements, continuing to transform the teaching and learning experience in Amarillo. communities. The district IT department and division of instruction have forged a strong partnership to integrate technology into instruction. "We have to meet the needs of a large number of students and staff across a range of time and space," said John Canuel, Executive Director, Educational Technology Services, Division of Instruction. "The only way we can do it is digitally."