



Blackboard®K-12

5 Ways for School Districts to Do More with Less

With the nation's economic challenges and the prospect of state and local budget shortfalls, school systems everywhere are facing budgetary pressures and the possibility of significant reductions. Districts are seeking solutions for reducing costs without negatively affecting the quality and scope of their core instructional programs. The good news is some districts are already doing just that by finding innovative ways to do more with less.

Blackboard asked them to share their tips for success.



Blackboard

1 Go digital with curriculum guides

School districts spend significant dollars developing, printing, and distributing curriculum binders. In response, Baltimore City School District transitioned to digital guides and developed digital planning resources that reside on their Blackboard® system.

A Maryland state survey¹ estimated that Baltimore City Public Schools saved over \$1.5 million per year by going digital with curriculum guides for the district's 7,500 teachers.

they quickly realized the ease of building lesson plans. Also, if a teacher transfers or leaves the district, no one has to retrieve the curriculum binder for the next teacher. The log-in simply changes.

A Maryland state survey¹ estimated that Baltimore City Public Schools saved over \$1.5 million per year by going digital with curriculum guides for the district's 7,500 teachers. "We use Blackboard software as a portal for all teacher resources," said Bert Ross, Manager for the Teacher Support System, Baltimore City Public Schools. "Anything a teacher needs to get to on the Web or as a file can be found on our Blackboard system."

Now, teachers log-in wherever and whenever they need access to these resources. This online content can be updated, refined, and easily reused from year to year with little to no cost. Embedded links put the latest learning resources at teachers' fingertips. Once teachers had electronic access,

Development for Marion County Public Schools provides programs for 3,000 instructional staff and 2,500 non-instructional personnel. Florida requires anyone teaching remedial reading courses to complete a 300-hour course for certification or add-on endorsement. A \$15 per hour stipend per teacher plus the costs of facilities, trainers, and other expenses of running a face-to-face course added up to more than \$30,000 for just one of the six competencies in the program.

Looking for a way to do more with less, Underwood's team developed online Reading Endorsement Courses for each competency under the Florida plan, up to 60 in-service hours each, and made them available to all teachers in the district by leveraging Blackboard technology.

"Using Blackboard software, we reduced the cost of running reading certification courses for each of the six competencies by approximately 40%," said Underwood. "And additional cost savings will occur each time the course is offered because the cost of creating content is non-recurring."

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The online option also gave teachers the flexibility to meet state requirements without having to travel to the district office or disrupt their

2 Enhance teacher quality with online professional development

When Marilyn Underwood did the math, she calculated that meeting the Florida Reading Endorsement competency requirements would require a significant portion of her staff development budget. The Executive Director of Staff



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schedules to attend a face-to-face course. Once teachers have participated in the course, it becomes a resource for them in the classroom and provides follow-up to build on what they have learned.

3 Give students and teachers more flexibility with online summer school

When Deer Valley Unified School District switched from face-to-face to online summer school by leveraging its Blackboard technology, the district more than doubled enrollment while significantly reducing costs.

The district no longer buses students from five different high schools to one facility for 6 hours of class each day. Instead, students work at home and at their own pace. With the flexibility of online courses, students can travel with their families, go to work and still earn credits to stay on track. Deer Valley also finds it much easier to recruit summer school teachers, which translates to a greater number of courses. "There are more choices," said Chad Turley, Instructional Technology Manager, department of educational services. "We were limited to the teachers we could get for the summer. We offered 17 face-to-face classes the last year of face-to-face summer school. We offer over 60 now."

Deer Valley Unified School District Summer School	
2005	2006
Offered face-to-face summer school	Implemented Blackboard software to offer online summer school
17 classes	60+ classes
Enrollment: 250 students	Enrollment: 1,500 students

An increase of 500% in student enrollment

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With traditional summer school, the district spent about \$100,000 per year for buses, facilities, electricity, and teachers, yet only about 250 students took advantage of the program, leaving the district with a deficit and many students without the credits they needed to graduate. When the district first offered online summer school classes in 2006, enrollment jumped to 1,500 students. The lower cost of providing online summer school courses also means the district now earns back 80 percent of its operating expenses even though it still charges the same modest tuition.

4 Consider online instructional resources to enrich student learning

As school districts balance the challenges of engaging 21st century students, meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act and significantly reducing spending, they are getting creative with online resources. "Students start learning before we get to class by using our Blackboard software," said Cheryl Rowley of Cobb County School District. "Student access to resources like video, blogs and other teacher-identified resources extends the classroom and bridges the time between classes. Students and teachers can then spend more in-class time on instruction, discussion and student-teacher learning exchanges." Virtual field trips, guest speakers, and global pen pals extend learning beyond the classroom without high-cost travel.

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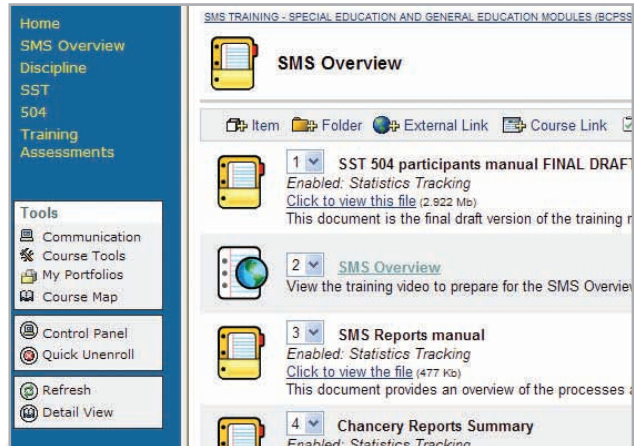
5. Allow employees to learn at their own pace, on their own desktop

5 Allow employees to learn at their own pace, on their own desktop

Rolling out new software in large or widespread districts can cost as much in training as it does to deploy. To speed adoption with faster, cheaper, and more accurate training, Baltimore City offers online courses with Blackboard software. Instead of paying for a trainer, facilities, refreshments and other costs to provide identical training session over and over, the training department spends three hours developing a single course used by thousands of people from their own desktops. Training occurs at home or at school, when teachers and staff members have the time and energy to learn.

“We don’t pay a stipend, and they don’t have to travel,” said Ross. Employees have two opportunities to pass the online assessment. If they fail a third time, they come to the district office or a trainer goes to their site for face-to-face training. The district videotapes the training and posts it online in chapters for easy review. “There is an upswing in help costs when we introduce something

new,” said Ross, “but it drops off much sooner and doesn’t recur.” The district has also used online training to roll-out a new student information system, payroll system and grading tool.



Baltimore City offers online courses with Blackboard software.

As your school district faces tough budget decisions, Blackboard is your partner. In these challenging times, we’re here to help you provide personalized and engaging learning experiences and bring about measurable learning outcomes.

Visit www.blackboard.com/k12/learn to learn more and download a copy of the eduviews publication *Doing More with Less* at www.k12perspectives.com/domore.



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