Puget Sound Educational Service District

FOSTERING SUCCESS FOR EVERY EDUCATOR:
PD Online® Courses in Puget Sound

Professional Learning Model: PD Online Courses
Focused Area of Need: Multiple Areas
Type: Large Educational Service District

OVERVIEW

Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) is one of the largest of the state-mandated educational service districts in Washington State. With the overarching goal of providing high-quality and cost-effective professional development to teachers, administrators, school staff, and other education professionals serving prekindergarten through high school students, PSESD came to ASCD for help in achieving the following:

- Create a 24/7 professional development program.
- Deliver training that meets individual educators’ learning needs on a wide range of topics.
- Provide content that helps PSESD educators create success for each child, eliminate the opportunity gap, and become an antiracist multicultural organization.

“[For educators], having the opportunity to access online, high quality, professional development on their own time and in the location of their choosing was critical.”
– Julie Rolling, PSESD assistant superintendent, Learning, Teaching, and Family Support

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BACKGROUND

Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) comprises 35 school districts and 200 private schools in both urban and rural areas, including Seattle. PSESD touches more than 413,800 students—about 39 percent of the state’s K-12 public school students.

PSESD is one of Washington’s nine regional educational service districts (ESDs), which aim to improve the quality, equity, and efficiency of educational programs across the state. ESDs manage partnerships between K-12 schools, public and private organizations, and service providers. They serve as the intermediary between Washington’s department of education and the school districts, and they provide support and services such as professional development.

ChALLENGE

With 35 school districts, PSESD’s capacity to serve educators’ individual learning needs in a meaningful way presented a huge concern. Considering issues such as teachers’ busy schedules and driving time and distance, most district educators would not be able to attend a regional workshop. Also, the shortage of available substitute teachers means that teachers often cannot attend professional development training sessions held during the school day. Faced with these roadblocks, PSESD sought creative ways to offer professional development that would support its aspirational goals of eliminating the opportunity gap and creating success for every child by 2020. PSESD needed a solution that would save money and time and increase educators’ knowledge on an ongoing basis.

ASCD SOLUTION

Through discussions with the PSESD’s leadership, ASCD’s team discerned their desire to provide PSESD with on-demand professional development that includes video lessons, practical classroom examples, reading, and discussion forums through the PD Online tool, which allows educators to access useful information when they need it. This solution provides more cost-effective and convenient delivery than in-person training sessions, and meets the needs of PSESD educators at all levels of experience.

I loved that it was self-paced with a variety of strategies for learning.

- PD Online course user, Parents as Partners in Schooling

I really appreciate that I could complete this course on my own timeline. The information was thoughtfully presented and easy to follow. Overall, I feel that this class format was very well laid out.

- PD Online course user, Parents as Partners in Schooling
convenient professional development that would meet a variety of educators’ needs while keeping down training and event costs. The solution was to offer access to ASCD’s PD Online, which provides web-based courses on a wide range of topics. Developed by educators and education experts and recognized by industry professionals (PD Online was a finalist for the 2016 “Cool Tool Awards” from EdTech Digest and a 2012 finalist for the AEP Golden Lamp award), these courses blend theoretical information and real classroom applications.

Each course consists of six learning modules that break down important educational concepts and best practices for learning, teaching, or leading with videos, readings, and other materials developed by respected education professionals. For example, educators can learn how to use the five components of the Framework for Intentional and Targeted Teaching® based on the works of Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey or learn the Differentiated Instruction model using resources by Carol Ann Tomlinson. These self-paced courses are perfect for busy educators with limited time to devote to their own learning needs.

PSESD provides professional development services for teachers, administrators, paraeducators, and school staff. Using the PD Online courses allows PSESD to expand its offerings to better serve individual educators. Through PD Online, PSESD can tailor professional development to individual teachers’ needs for immediate application, rather than offering the same training to hundreds of people at once.

“We wanted to offer a variety of K–12 professional development to meet educators’ range of needs,” says Julie Rolling, PSESD’s assistant superintendent of learning, teaching, and family support. “Given Seattle’s traffic issues and educators’ busy schedules, driving to a regional workshop is not feasible for most. So, having the opportunity to access online, high-quality, professional development on their own time and in the location of their choosing was critical.”

Educators taking the courses can receive clock hour credits (credit for training hours) or gain continuing education credits through local universities. The ASCD affiliate in Washington also offers clock hours for the courses. Many of the courses link to recertification goals. In addition, because new teacher support programs have been cut in many of the local school districts, these teachers have found the PD Online courses extremely helpful.

“Online classes supplement the in-district professional development that educators already receive. These classes often fill a need for individual teachers that is different than the needs of their entire staff. For instance, many new teachers find the sessions on classroom management helpful, and others offer another learning opportunity for a topic that has great depth, like differentiated instruction. Experts, like Bob Marzano, have come in to work, and then we utilize the online classes prior to or after the face-to-face sessions to help educators deepen and apply learning,” says Rolling.

Recognizing that one-day workshops on a prescribed topic do not satisfy educators’ ongoing learning needs, PSESD sees the PD Online courses as a valuable tool in educators’ toolboxes. The courses also play an important role in advancing PSESD’s equity and student achievement goals by helping teachers create inclusive classrooms, encourage
diversity, and respond to the unique needs of English language learners, while supporting leaders to foster positive conversations about teaching and learning and to create a welcoming environment for every student and family across the 35 school districts.

RESULTS

In 2015, PSESD’s teachers particularly enjoyed PD Online courses that addressed topics on brain-based learning, classroom management, teaching English language learners, and parental engagement.

“Each year the number of classes taken has increased significantly and the response has been very positive. The content is very high quality, relevant to their teaching setting, and a convenient way of learning new information to better serve students. Educators appreciate hearing from experts, and applying what they’ve learned to their own setting, as well as being able to work at their own pace,” says Rolling.

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Julie Rolling

To ensure the PD Online courses continue to meet educators’ goals as their needs change, PSESD uses surveys to determine which courses are the most useful and which to replace.

PSESD’s goal of creating success for every learner is a goal that ASCD understands. For more than 70 years, ASCD has been dedicated to creating success for every child. Through products such as PD Online, ASCD is helping PSESD educators achieve their goal. The quality of the PD Online courses has made them popular with PSESD educators, and working with ASCD to implement them has been a positive relationship.

“I certainly have much confidence in the quality of the product, the responsiveness in terms of establishing the partnership and working together [with ASCD]. It’s a great option to offer,” says Rolling.

Top PD Online Courses Taken in PSESD

- The Brain: Memory and Learning Strategies, 2nd Edition
- Classroom Management: Managing Challenging Behavior, 2nd Edition
- Classroom Management: Building Effective Relationships, 2nd Edition
- The Brain: Developing Lifelong Learning Habits, 2nd Edition
- Parents as Partners in Schooling, 2nd Edition

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