

SUCCESS STORY

Rockhill Elementary School Stafford County Public Schools



ENVIRONMENT

Stafford County is located forty miles south of Washington, D.C., near the popular vacation destinations of Virginia Beach and Colonial Williamsburg. Stafford's rich history is evident in places like Ferry Farm and George Washington's boyhood home. Stafford has become one of the fastest growing counties in Virginia and is a family-oriented suburban community with plenty of rural countryside.

The district enrollment exceeded 26,157 in the 2007-2008 school year in 17 elementary schools, 7 middle schools and 5 high schools. The county's ESL population has grown over the last 10 years. Ethnic groups from all over the world have settled in Stafford due to its location near Washington D.C. and Richmond. The demographic distribution for the county is approximately 74% Caucasian, 18% African American, 5% Hispanic (the fastest growing population), and 3% Asian.

Ms. Wauchop is a 5th grade teacher at Rockhill Elementary School. She has six years of experience as a classroom teacher, primarily at the 5th grade level. Because she speaks Spanish, she was selected to work with ESL students. Ms. Wauchop's classroom consists of 24-28 students. Almost 30% of the students are designated ESL, which include Latino, African, Korean, Bosnian, and Middle Eastern heritage.

CHALLENGE

Ms. Wauchop sought a new approach to engaging ESL students while avoiding any significant alterations to instruction for the general class. She was concerned that some ESL students could not make all the connections from written to spoken English and vice versa. Additionally, the 5th grade overall had not met the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Social Studies benchmarks the last two years.

Another hurdle 5th grade teachers face is that they had to cover an extensive amount of content in one school year. Topics for 5th grade Social Studies include the 8 regions of the U.S., Native American Tribes, Explorers, Colonization, the Revolutionary War, Constitution, the Confederacy, and the Civil War. SOL testing takes place in May, leaving only eight months to cover all content prior to the test. Ms. Wauchop struggled with being able to cover all the material while at the same time keeping students engaged and motivated. In addition, because Virginia Studies is covered in 4th grade, 5th grade is the first time the students are exposed to many of the required benchmarks.

About Rockhill Elementary

- **575 students**
- **Rural Suburban**
- **K-5th**

About Stafford County Schools

- **30 schools**
- **26K students**
- **3.9% ESL**



SOLUTION

In 2005, the 5th grade teaching staff at Rockhill Elementary began using the Ignite! system. All of the 5th grade teachers attended a professional development session to learn strategies for incorporating the Ignite! Social Studies content into their daily lesson plans. Ms. Wauchop immediately identified the benefits provided with its ease of use and began to review the Ignite! Social Studies topics for upcoming lesson plans. She found that during her planning time, she was able to review the Ignite! content and then select what was most appropriate to her existing scope and sequence. She also found that the media could be used in a number of ways within her lesson plans including introducing, reinforcing, and reviewing concepts. Additionally, she was impressed that the Ignite! content for U.S. History to 1865 was also available in Spanish.

When the teachers reviewed the content, they were elated to see that the system covered all content required in the 5th grade. The comprehensive coverage Ignite! Social Studies provided saved them time and energy outside of class time when developing their lesson plans.

The students in Ms. Wauchop's class fell in love with Ignite! They learned all of the songs and enjoyed the narrative media pieces, especially those containing the character Mr. Bighead. One student in particular made a Mr. Bighead out of construction paper for a class presentation. The student wanted to show opposing viewpoints on a concept and used Mr. Bighead to demonstrate her points. One student with no prior English language education benefited greatly from the Ignite! system's ability to play identical media pieces in Spanish and English.

RESULTS

Ms. Wauchop found several benefits in using Ignite! with the ESL students in her class.

- The ability to control the pacing of the media allowed for connections to be made between the spoken and written words.
- Used as a test prep and content review system, Ignite! produced noticeable gains in retention.
- ESL students make connections between spoken and written words through the music and key words displayed on the screen.
- The U.S. History to 1865 lessons in Spanish allow for a media piece to be played in English and then played again in Spanish. This allows for further connections to be made for the Spanish speaking ESL students. Additionally, it provides enrichment for the English speaking students as they were introduced to Spanish.

LESSONS LEARNED

- ✓ **Ability to pace the media *critical* to engagement**
- ✓ **Reviewing lessons in Spanish *and* English *vital* for developing comprehension in ESL students**
- ✓ **Daily use possible due to complete coverage of U.S. History to 1865 Virginia Standards of Learning**

