

Using CASE to Power Standards-Based Learning for All Students



White Paper



Abstract

Last year it was more important than ever to provide a summer learning program for all students focused on enrichment and acceleration. To mitigate learning loss and unfinished learning precipitated by COVID, Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) and Classworks developed a customized, online Summer Enrichment and Acceleration (SEA) program.

The Competency and Academic Standards Exchange (CASE) framework proved to be a powerful tool for providing superior standards-based learning experiences for all students. GCPS and Classworks used CASE to power a new online SEA program for their more than 180,000 students. Classworks replaced a manual standards-mapping process that would have taken many weeks with a CASE-powered process that only took days.

The Challenge

Classworks and GCPS were faced with a unique challenge in the summer of 2021.

In order to both mitigate learning loss and effectively prepare students for the upcoming school year at the largest district in Georgia and the 13th largest nationwide, the district wanted to provide online access to focus skills-based lessons for all students during the summer. They planned to use evidence-based instruction powered by the Classworks platform.

GCPS has developed and maintained district specific standards known as Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS). The GCPS curriculum team identified the AKS standards in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics for all grades that would have the most impact on student achievement for the upcoming school year.

However, the Classworks instruction was aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence and not directly to the AKS. The challenge was that the number of man hours required for a manual alignment of the relevant Classworks instructional units to the Gwinnett AKS put the project in jeopardy for a May delivery. This is where the mission and objectives of open standards and interoperability championed by IMS Global came into play.



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About the AKS

Gwinnett's curriculum for grades K–12 is called the AKS and is aligned to the state-adopted Georgia Standards of Excellence in Language Arts (K-12), Mathematics (K-12), and literacy standards for Science, Social Studies, and Technical Education for middle and high school students. Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) are in place for other content areas. Gwinnett's AKS is a rigorous curriculum that prepares students for college and 21st century careers in a globally competitive future.

The AKS for each grade level spells out the essential concepts students are expected to know and skills they should acquire in that grade or subject. The AKS offers a solid base on which teachers build rich learning experiences. Teachers use curriculum guides, technology, and instructional resources to teach the AKS and to make sure every student is learning to his or her potential.

The AKS curriculum was developed by GCPS teachers, with input from our parents and community, in response to Gwinnett County Public Schools' mission statement:

The mission of Gwinnett County Public Schools is to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.

Gwinnett's commitment to the AKS for all summer enrichment and acceleration made it imperative that the Classworks skills align directly to the identified AKS for each grade.

Background

IMS Global Learning Consortium (IMS Global/IMS) is a nonprofit, member organization committed to advancing technology that can affordably scale and improve educational participation and attainment. To ensure the learning impact of technology-enabled innovation is achieved around the world, IMS Global's influential community of educational institutions, suppliers, and government organizations develops open interoperability standards, supports adoption with implementation resources, and encourages adoption through programs that highlight effective practices.

Together, the IMS member community is a force multiplier to accelerate digital transformation to enable education institutions to be more innovative, provide a more seamless user experience, and dramatically reduce the cost of integrating products into the educational enterprise systems.

Classworks has long been committed to IMS Global's interoperability vision. Classworks first adopted the LTI standard in June 2013. This allows districts to seamlessly search for and embed Classworks instructional units into any Learning Management System. In July 2015, Classworks adopted OneRoster. This allows for seamless student, staff, and class auto-rostering using the OneRoster open standard. The average student uses eight to twelve different software programs regularly when in school. Therefore, the ability to automatically unenroll and re-enroll students who change schools is a game-changer.

In 2019, Classworks partnered with EdGate for all alignment services. EdGate was selected because of their commitment to IMS Global's newest K-12 initiative, the CASE standard. As states and education organizations transition to using the IMS CASE specification, EdGate provides standards that complement those in the CASE Network. The CASE initiative takes interoperability to the next level by facilitating the exchange of information about learning outcomes. This information includes connecting the skills the student is working on to a state standard. In an ideal world, a teacher could easily see how all work the student is doing reflects their knowledge of a specific state standard. Unfortunately, in today's classrooms, this information is often held in proprietary formats and creating a larger picture of the student's knowledge and learning outcomes by standard is a manual process that is difficult to synthesize.

About CASE

The IMS Competencies and Academic Standards Exchange® (CASE®) standard facilitates the exchange of information about learning outcomes, competencies and skills. CASE can also transmit information about rubrics and criteria for performance of tasks. CASE supports association across frameworks so frameworks and items can be related and aligned. By implementing CASE, it is possible to electronically exchange outcomes, skills and competency definitions so applications, tools and algorithms can readily access and act upon this data. Having universal identifiers for learning outcomes, skills and competencies makes it possible for any tool or application to share precise information between systems easily, internally or across the web. This includes learning management systems, assessment tools, curriculum management, credentialing and hiring platforms.

Solution

Once the team realized the manual process put the project in jeopardy, they turned to technology to see if there was a faster method of aligning the Classworks instructional units to the AKS.

Luckily, GCPS is a Contributing member of IMS Global and is dedicated to interoperability and the open standard vision. GCPS utilizes the LearningMate Frost application to manage and publish the AKS standards into a CASE format for applications like Classworks to use.

Classworks was able to consume the AKS CASE standards using the JSON format. This quickly delivered every Classworks instructional skill unit aligned to each grade level AKS.

From here, instructional leaders were able to quickly confirm the instruction. It was released for all students in the summer of 2021. Not only was the process faster, it was also more accurate because it removed the subjectivity of alignments.



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Conclusion

All students in the GCPS system were able to take advantage of the Summer Enrichment and Acceleration program with high quality instructional units based on the exact AKS the district had identified as priority skills. This was accomplished more efficiently by allowing the instructional team to focus their efforts on spot-checking the accuracy of the alignment as opposed to spending countless hours manually aligning in multiple spreadsheets.

The use of the CASE GUIDs by Classworks, GCPS, and EdGate made this effort possible.

As a result of the summer effort, Classworks and GCPS are collaborating to bring an AKS edition to all students in the district for use during the year. This would replace the current edition of Classworks, which is aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence. A key aspect of this is creating a sustainable method for using CASE to maintain the annual alignment of Classworks instruction to Gwinnett's AKS.

About EdGate

EdGate's primary focus is to offer publishers and content providers an accurate, cost-effective way to align books, software, media and other instructional materials directly to educational performance standards and other content. As the leader in content mapping to educational standards, they customize their services to fit clients' very specific needs. Clients remark on their responsiveness and the deep understanding of educational standards that the subject matter experts display. Excellent customer service combined with highly efficient patented correlation technology and API services has made EdGate the success it is today.



For more information, contact Classworks at help@classworks.com, call 770-355-5555 or visit www.classworks.com.