

## OpenSalt

Houston Independent is a large and diverse school district, and faces similar challenges to most K12 districts in the US, only more so. They have Academic Standards published by the state, called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS for short, which define what a student should know and be able to do in each grade and subject. For those kids who are learning English as a second language, they also have English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards to meet.

Houston has a wide spectrum of students behind or ahead of reading proficiency targets. So finding content based on both TEKS skill and reading level is important to them. Houston has a wealth of data about student learning, but no easy way to view it and make sense of it together. In addition, Houston has purchased a lot of books, both physical and digital and also use to various software, web links, videos, and activities from all the big publishers, not to mention content from district created lessons. The district implemented a learning management system to manage all the digital media so they can find it easily. However, when they went to load all that content into their LMS, using the IMS Global Common Cartridge format, they found a painful surprise. They discovered that even when the content is aligned to the TEKS by the publisher, each publisher uses a different versions of the TEKS and tags the content in ways that make it impossible to use.

Before the IMS Global CASE specification, there was no way to get the publishers to all use the same version of the TEKS. The whole system breaks down because of the lack of common tags for the TEKS skills. That was before CASE. With PCG's OpenSALT tool, and integrating using CASE, the picture looks much better. When the state publishes the TEKS, it is converted into machine readable version in the CASE format and loaded into PCG's OpenSALT tool. In fact the TEA is piloting doing just that.

Within OpenSALT, the STAAR reporting categories can be defined as a "Derivative" of the published TEKS, not as a separate document. So now Houston can ask all of its content and assessment vendors to use the same version of the TEKS, the one hosted for them in SALT, and it will all just work like they want. Something that was all but impossible before SALT was on the CASE.

But that is just the start of the positive impact of common alignments, because CASE also enables holistic analytics and reporting. In the proof of concept PCG is conducting with Houston, we are combining their Math and Reading test data as criteria, along with English Language Proficiency status and other special factors that would impact the ideal instructional strategy for a given student. The end result is that each learner can receive a personalized learning "Playlist" selected from all the materials available in the district, and teachers can easily see which students need different types of special attention or instructional strategies.

What PCG and Houston have discovered is that enabling common alignment with the IMS Global CASE specification address several critical problems faced by real districts in managing their digital materials. Even more importantly, it enables connecting their assessment and instruction functions in real time, to optimize and personalize learning to the real needs of their students. CASE and PCG's OpenSALT, are not just about Texas, or K12, but building the capability to exchange skills and competencies to enable learning pathways from the youngest primary grades, through secondary, postsecondary and professional credentialing.