

Success Story

Dickinson Independent School District

DICKINSON, TX

Grades: K–12

Model: Alternative school and summer school programs

Goal: Integrate technology to give students flexibility

Impact: Helping students who would have dropped out, are credit deficient, or need extra attention

Time: 2014–2019

Technology Keeps Up with the Needs of Students

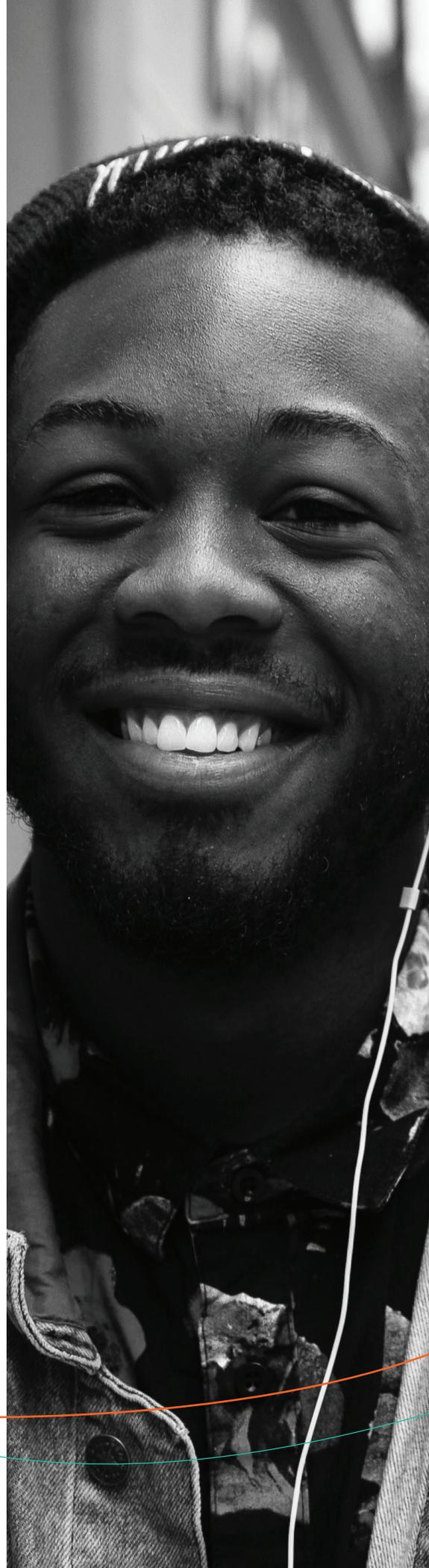
“It’s important to understand the why before you do the how,” says Social Studies Curriculum Specialist, Susan Haynes. In her role of designing curriculum and coaching teachers throughout Dickinson ISD in Texas, Haynes works to help educators understand the resources available to them and feel comfortable integrating them into the classroom. With 12 years’ experience in the district, Haynes has seen her fair share of technology trends, but she believes technology is “worth the investment” when she sees struggling students get to graduation.

RETHINKING EDUCATION

As the fastest growing district in Galveston County, Dickinson ISD works hard to meet the needs of all of their students. The Dickinson Continuation Center was created about five years ago to cater to students for whom the traditional high-school setting was not working. It’s still a high school, but it allows students to learn at their own pace. The majority of their coursework is completed on Edgenuity Courseware, and instructors do face-to-face lessons with small groups of students to reinforce the areas that are covered most heavily on the STAAR assessment.

TECHNOLOGY KEEPS UP WITH THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

As a Google district, Dickinson ISD is no stranger to technology. Google’s G Suite for Education is growing in popularity throughout the district, and teachers are incorporating podcasts, current events, and Edgenuity lessons into their courses, which empowers students to do more things at their own pace. “In classrooms, technology has a stigma, and I wish we as teachers understood how students can use technology to do the learning,” says Haynes.



Unlike other districts, Dickinson does not have one-to-one technology resources, so they have to be creative. Internet access at home is limited and many students don't have computers, only their smartphones, so the district has a program called Lighted Windows, Open Doors, which gives students access to the library for internet and computer usage after hours. Teachers also work to make activities accessible on all devices because, as Haynes points out, "students constantly have a phone in their hand, so we are trying to tap into that in the classroom."

ENGAGE A STELLAR IT DEPARTMENT

After getting new support for technology from administration a few years ago, Dickinson ISD saw an influx of resources in their technology department. Curriculum specialists like Haynes work with the IT department to format the Edgenuity Courseware and other materials to meet district standards. Haynes also trains teachers and coaches them on how to incorporate Edgenuity into their classroom. Meanwhile, IT works behind the scenes to make sure both the curriculum team and educators are using all of their systems to the fullest while addressing any issues that may arise. This has also been pivotal in getting teachers onboard as the IT team helps teach educators how to use the system.

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LEARN FROM MISSTEPS

Haynes focuses on putting students first, and encourages others to be tenacious when instituting any change into their curriculum. "Don't get discouraged and don't give up too quickly," she cautions. Instead, use missteps as a way to learn what doesn't work. For example, Haynes learned that having a certified teacher in the room during summer school was essential. "These students don't have the luxury of waiting to get answers to questions about content," so she engages multiple social studies content teachers year-round to give students the support they need.

"While I encourage educators to take a risk and be tenacious, I also know we need to be focused. We are hyper-focused on Edgenuity and we are instituting it in a way that is purposeful and intentional," she said. They're helping students who would have dropped out, are credit deficient, or just need some extra attention. But this program didn't develop overnight, and after about five years, they've worked out many of the kinks, but still continue to improve. Haynes looks to help teachers to be more successful, and Edgenuity is helping her do that.

