

Case Study

Catahoula Parish School District

CATAHOULA PARISH, LOUISIANA

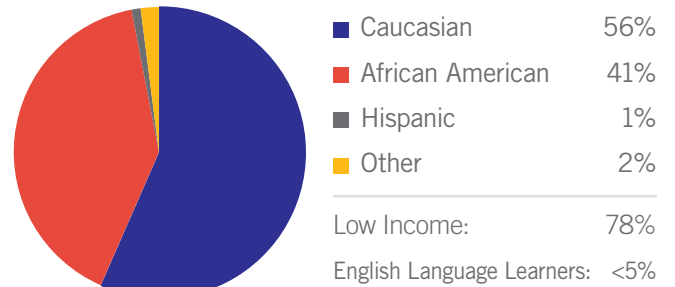
Can a virtual learning program make foreign language courses accessible to all students?

Challenge: Faced with budget cuts, a rural district was grappling with how to offer Spanish language courses without hiring a new foreign language teacher.

Solution: Edgenuity Instructional Services virtual teachers helped students acquire credits and master Spanish language skills.

Outcome: 98 percent of students completed a course they would not otherwise have had access to.

School Demographics



Background

Catahoula Parish School District (CPSD) serves 1,500 students in the small agricultural communities within Catahoula Parish, approximately 130 miles north of Baton Rouge. Like many rural districts, CPSD confronts both economic and human capital constraints. In 2012, the district faced a particularly daunting challenge: how to offer state-required foreign language courses without the budget to hire a highly qualified teacher.

To address this challenge, CPSD decided to offer six online Spanish language courses. The district sought an online learning provider that would not only increase student motivation with engaging content, but would also offer highly qualified teachers who could provide personalized support to students and staff. The district chose Edgenuity Instructional Services because of its multiple layers of academic support and attentive customer service. CPSD appreciated that Edgenuity could provide state-certified instructors who could provide personalized learning. They also liked that Edgenuity provided end-to-end consultative project management.



“From our initial conversation it was clear that Edgenuity was going to be able to provide us with the strategic leadership needed to lay the groundwork for success.”

Dr. Gwile Paul Freeman, Superintendent, Catahoula Parish School District

Professional Collaboration

With the help of Edgenuity Instructional Services, CPSD recognized the need to communicate its vision for the new online Spanish language courses, as well as to articulate the conditions that would help students thrive. In addition to establishing implementation fidelity, they understood that stakeholders would need to establish a communication plan to monitor student progress, achievement, and engagement. They also would need to set up formal processes to target students' individual needs.

Edgenuity school leaders and CPSD staff met regularly to define and articulate implementation goals and academic expectations, as well as establish best teaching practices, training, schedules, and communication plans.

“We wanted to have a strong facilitator that not only established roles and responsibilities but also reinforced communication between the district, Edgenuity, parents, and students,” said Superintendent, Dr. Gwile Paul Freeman. “From our initial first meeting it was clear that Edgenuity was going to be able to provide us with the strategic leadership needed to lay the groundwork for success. Regular meetings with Edgenuity helped bolster administrator satisfaction and student achievement.”

To prepare for implementation, an Edgenuity partnership advisor and a customer support specialist set up student enrollment, reviewed technical infrastructure, and assigned students to courses. Edgenuity trained district leaders and students on how to use the Spanish language course. In addition, CPSD trained their own lab teachers on how to support students in the program.

Personalized Learning

Spanish language courses were offered to high school students in a computer lab 55 minutes a day, five days a week. The lab was supported by a CPSD teacher or staff member who set expectations and ensured students were actively engaged in their Edgenuity coursework.

Students were also supported by Edgenuity virtual teachers who set academic goals, conducted demonstrations, and retaught material as needed. These virtual instructors used data from the Edgenuity learning management system to monitor and address students' unique learning needs.

“Establishing teacher presence is critical to student satisfaction and success in online courses,” said Eric Chauvin, Technology Coordinator. “I was impressed how Edgenuity teachers were able to reduce the psychological distance between their students. Edgenuity instructors built connections based on students' interest, established an ongoing rapport, and shared personal stories.”

Edgenuity virtual instructors were also proactive in communicating with students about their grades, pacing, and course goals. “They truly took a one-on-one approach, offering different learning strategies to address each student's unique needs. And Edgenuity virtual instructors always kept CPSD administrators, teachers, and parents in the loop,” said Mr. Chauvin.

Results

Over the course of the program, Mr. Chauvin and Dr. Freeman noted that the Edgenuity course sparked students' interest in foreign languages and cultures. "We have students who have gone on to major in Spanish at college." said Dr. Freeman.

When CPSD course usage data were analyzed, results revealed that students excelled in the Spanish I and II language courses. On average Edgenuity students completed 98 percent of their courses and had an average overall grade of 84 percent (see Table 1).

Table 1: Catahoula Parish School District Edgenuity High School Students

Edgenuity Spanish Course Usage Data, August 1, 2013–May 31, 2014

Course Name	Total Number of Courses	Average Percent of Course Completed	Average Overall Grade (%)	Average Number of Calendar Days
HS Spanish I A	46	97%	81%	125
HS Spanish I B	46	95%	83%	100
HS Spanish II A	26	100%	86%	130
HS Spanish II B	26	100%	88%	105
Spanish I	3	100%	85%	137
Spanish II	3	100%	89%	218
Total	150	98%	84%	117