



YAKIMA SCHOOL DISTRICT

About the Yakima School District

The Yakima School District serves more than 15,000 students at 24 public elementary, middle, and high schools in and around the city of Yakima, which is located in central Washington state. The district employs more than 2,000 faculty and staff.

Yakima schools inspire staff, support tech in the classroom with lynda.com

The Yakima School District faced the type of IT challenge experienced by academic institutions the world over: how to bring hundreds of faculty and staff members up to speed with Microsoft Office 2010 after migrating the district network from Office 2003.

“We needed to do a lot of training,” said Eric Franz, Career Technical Education (CTE) instructional technician. “I was thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, that’s 900 teachers plus staff. I don’t think one person can help everybody.’”

The migration came as everyday training requests already were on the rise, Franz said. “I had staff who were saying, ‘Hey, can you do an Excel training for me? And then a teacher would say, ‘I want to learn more about Android.’ Or, ‘I want to do some AutoCAD.’”

“They would say, ‘Can you teach software to the kids?’ I had to learn applications on a quick turnaround basis, and I was like, ‘You know, I’m only going to be able to learn so many pieces of software.’ I was getting 15 to 20 requests a week and doing a lot of site visits. It was tough.”

The district needed to provide efficient, cost-effective, on-demand training on a wide range of software, creative, and productivity skills to students, faculty, and staff. And it needed to track results. “We have to be able to say, ‘This is worth it, and here’s why it’s worth it,’ so we need data to prove it’s used,” Franz said.

Solution: lynda.com

Franz researched several options and lynda.com stood out, he said, adding that he recruited five teachers to help evaluate the service on a trial basis.

Franz praised its ability to generate detailed usage reports. “The lynda.com videos are great. And the data reporting side is just beautiful. It didn’t take us very long to make a decision. The best investment in on-demand training we could make was in lynda.com.”

In Fall 2012, the district purchased lyndaCampus, which provides lynda.com access to large numbers of end users at multiple sites through personalized accounts that track user training histories. At Yakima, all district faculty and staff as well as 7,000 students at the district’s four middle schools and three high schools have access to lynda.com courses as well as corresponding exercise files, which let users follow along and complete projects demonstrated by lynda.com instructors.

BENEFITS

- Supports technology in the classroom
- Provides convenient professional development
- Frees IT to focus on strategic initiatives

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Result: enhanced classroom learning

Teachers use lynda.com at all grade levels to supplement lesson plans—supporting a wide range of classes including photography, 3D design, and engineering. Students in a Microsoft certification program use lynda.com to prepare for exams, and unlike before can pursue as many certifications as they wish at their own pace.

Teachers often share brief video tutorials with students as part of a lesson, Franz said. “A teacher might say, ‘Here’s a concept that is not covered in our textbook.’ Or maybe it’s not explained that well. They can show the video as reinforcement. Or students can go to lynda.com for extra learning.

“We have one teacher who uses it for ‘entry tasks,’” Franz said. “The teacher will use a three- or four-minute lynda.com tutorial to kick off a class. Kids come in and watch the clip, do the exercise file, and then submit it for credit.”

Moreover, “within a few minutes, a teacher can cover several modes of learning. It’s nice for visual learners to actually see a video,” Franz said, adding that students who learn well by reading can follow the highlighted course transcript as the video plays, or go back to it later, while lynda.com exercise files benefit kinesthetic learners.

In addition, “we have some kids who are really into the idea of learning with lynda.com at home,” Franz said.

At Lewis and Clark Middle School, “lynda.com has really helped me understand different types of software,” said Stephen K. Wolfe, visual communications instructor. “The videos are awesome. They are short, well defined, and I use them a lot in the classroom. I hope the district continues to subscribe.”

Result: convenient, cost-effective training

Usage grew substantially when Yakima began allowing faculty to count lynda.com instruction toward clock hours, or professional development credits. Credit accumulation helps teachers move up the district pay scale. Education officials agreed to the plan largely because lynda.com reports confirm which courses teachers view or complete.

Because lynda.com is available on demand, Yakima teachers have a convenient and cost-effective way to build their careers during the school year or summer.

“How much is any district paying to send people to in-person trainings?” Franz said. “How much money are they spending just on travel alone? Plus we have to get substitute teachers to fill in. And what about the cost of bringing in a speaker?”

“For a fraction of all that, we can provide lynda.com. And the teachers don’t have to leave the classroom.”

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Courses on matting and framing photographs, Word 2010, Blackboard®, productivity pointers, and tips for teachers rank among the most popular viewed by faculty, Franz said.

Non-faculty staff members also benefit. Using searchable lynda.com course transcripts, they can quickly find answers to questions that arise during the workday, Franz said, adding they are less reliant on him and others for assistance. "They can go in, find that quick video, and be done instead of having to spend 10 or 15 minutes just finding somebody who can help."

Result: a more strategic help desk

Because faculty and staff can turn to lynda.com when they get stuck or want to learn something new, Franz can focus on bigger, more strategic IT initiatives.

"Now they can watch a three-minute lynda.com video," Franz said. "I still do trainings. I will continue, no question, especially when it comes to high-level skills or clarifications. But I don't have as many now. It frees me up. Instead of working with staff and running all over, I can get into the classroom more and work with the kids when they need it."

Looking ahead

Parents of homeschooled children in the district have embraced lynda.com—and Franz expects more to follow, he said. "Homeschool parents started calling and saying, 'My kid wants to learn something. How can I get it to him?' I told them, 'I've got something for you.' The parents are just loving it."

Franz plans to create a wide range of lynda.com course playlists to be shared among users. Teachers could assign his playlists to students, or have the ability to create their own for the same purpose.

"I'm going to say, 'If you're a beginner with Office, here are the courses I suggest,'" Franz said. "And if you are more advanced, 'Here is a different series that I suggest. And if you have trouble using AutoCAD, here is what I suggest. Android tablets? Here's what I suggest.'"

Franz will continue to recommend lynda.com, he said. "lynda.com is a must, and you should have it. It's been great."