

Neenah Joint School District Empowering Teachers, Inspiring Students

Neenah Joint School District is a suburban district in Wisconsin on the west shore of Lake Winnebago. The district enrolls 6,300 students in 15 buildings, and is well known for its academic, artistic and athletic excellence. In fact, it was recently voted one of the top 100 school districts by MONEY magazine.



Snapshot of District

District Type	Suburban
Enrollment	6250
Total Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Elementary Schools 2 Middle Schools 1 High School 1 Charter School 1 Early Learning Center

The Challenge



"Many of our students have never seen a subway and Discovery Education allows us to bring the concept to life in a more interactive, more engaging, and non-linear way."

Diane Doersch

Director of Instructional Technology
Neenah Joint School District

Neenah Joint School District (NJSD) leadership has a large vision – to bring the best educational resources to their students and teachers. For the 2010-11 school year, NJSD installed a laptop and projector in every classroom. NJSD was looking for a core curriculum solution that would meet the learning needs of all their students. “We know that technology allows access to the content,” said Diane Doersch, Director of Instructional Technology, “and we needed something the teachers would use”.

Neenah Joint School District Implemented the Following Discovery Education Services

- » Discovery Education *streaming*
- » Professional Development

The Solution

NJSD expanded their existing Discovery Education *streaming* implementation from middle and high school only to cover the entire school district. “Now we can explain what a subway is and how it works, by showing [the students] a picture or video,” said Doersch. “Many of our students have never seen a subway and Discovery Education allows us to bring the concept to life in a more interactive, more engaging, and non-linear way.”

Building Success Through Professional Development

Doersch faced a challenge – getting all the teachers to use Discovery Education to the full extent of its capabilities. Discovery Education had mainly been used for streaming videos or adding video segments into lessons. But, there was more to offer. “Discovery Education is a one stop shop for lesson plans, resources and writing prompts, as well as videos, that can be integrated into what a teacher does,” said Doersch.

To be successful, Doersch realized that she had to implement a structure that would touch every teacher and help him or her learn to teach with technology. “We want to get our teachers confident and ready,” said Doersch. To help her with this task, Doersch called on Discovery Education trainer, Kim Randall. “We needed to put together an engaging program that would capture the attention of our teachers, so we employed a coaching model that the district has had success with,” Doersch stated. “Kim worked with our mentor team over the summer and taught them how to use Discovery Education. We use our Professional Learning Days, one half day per month during the school year, to train the teachers.”

Over the course of summer training days, Kim taught the NJSD trainers how to best integrate Discovery Education into their classrooms. “I knew it was successful when they attended all four days during their summer vacation,” said Doersch, who experienced different levels of engagement with teachers when it comes to technology. “The teachers were amazed at the resources available at their fingertips,” she said, “it was like a resource they had never had that they could now use right out of the box.”

Doersch was also excited about the Discovery Educator Network (DEN) and the free Professional Development resources that come as part of her subscription to Discovery Education *streaming*. “We are just getting started with the DEN, but there are so many great resources that are available and free. Our team is excited because [Discovery Education] has some really cool things.” Doersch also recognized the value of the professional learning community to her team as they embark on their efforts. “It’s really motivating for our teachers to see that there are others out there doing it,” said Doersch, “they are really benefiting from the resources.”





Sustaining the Change Effort

Now that the training is underway, the work of sustaining the change effort begins. Doersch is implementing a new operating model to ensure her teachers are applying what they learned in the classroom. "One of our district goals is to implement Power Walkthrough," said Doersch, "each admin spends an hour a day in the classroom. We are collecting data on what teachers are implementing regularly, teaching strategies, levels of student thinking and variations of technology use." NJSD plans to use the data to continually refine their new instructional approach. Teachers are also responsible for creating four new lesson plans per school year incorporating technology and differentiated instruction, and sharing those lesson plans across the district.

The Year Ahead

As Doersch looks forward to the coming school year, she is filled with excitement and anticipation. "It is really important that we are doing all of this," she says, "this is all the hard work that you have to put in before you can achieve those great results." And with Discovery Education, she feels that she has a partner that will help her achieve her goals. "Discovery Education has really been great. For me, who is trying to facilitate a district wide implementation, and positively impact student learning, Discovery Education has helped us do it right and made our lives easier."