KANSAS ADOPTS PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

Project management is key to developing students ready for college and careers.

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KANSAS ADOPTS PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

The state of Kansas is leading the way in teaching project management skills to high school students in order to better prepare them for success in college and careers. This statewide initiative presents opportunities attractive to students, teachers, school districts, and employers, setting the stage for implementing this strategy across additional states.

According to the research gathered by Clelia McCrory, State Director of Grants/Career and Technical Education/Kansas Engineering by Design for ESSDACK, an organization focused on the development of educators and school districts, the number-one reason why students fail during their first year in college is because they lack time management and project planning skills. With support and key resources from the PMI Educational Foundation (PMIEF) and the approval of the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), McCrory has spearheaded an initiative to help high school students across the state become better equipped for success in college and careers through education in project management.

While at an Association of Career and Technical Educators (ACTE) conference last year, McCrory attended a session on project management given by Diane Fromm, Program Administrator for PMIEF, and quickly saw it as a way to develop college- and career-ready students.

"Most students do not understand how to break a project apart and sequence the tasks. They need to be taught how to prioritize, manage the flow of work, and bring all aspects of a project together to meet deadlines with success," McCrory says.

"We need to prepare them for college where they are given a syllabus and expected to manage their time, be ready for exams, and complete all projects."

"PMIEF is very excited about our partnership with Clelia and ESSDACK," says Diane Fromm. "This presents a wonderful opportunity to reach many more students and teachers and provide them with project management skills and knowledge." The implementation of this plan begins with a training offered this November. PMIEF will train three ESSDACK specialists and 27 teachers in project management. Two weeks after receiving the training, the ESSDACK specialists will train more teachers to begin the process of transmitting the learning across the state. To maintain the integrity of the model, PMIEF will continue to provide oversight and will contribute the training resource, Project Management Toolkit for Teachers™. McCrory noted that teachers are vital to the successful implementation of any initiative, and they have been very receptive. Not only does training in project management provide professional development recognized by the Kansas State Department of Education, it also enables them to implement the project management structure in the classroom and teach subjects in a new way.

Todd Vogts teaches English and journalism at Sterling High School in Sterling, Kansas, and he quickly embraced the opportunity to integrate project management into his English III Literature class. After being introduced to this concept by McCrory and integrating content from the Project Management Toolkit for Teachers™, he became a front-runner in this initiative, piloting this approach in the classroom this past January.

"Teaching students project management as a way to approach a large assignment really helps students engage and connect it to the real world. In the process of larger projects, like creating their own portfolio or making a booklet, they are learning to manage their time and take charge of all the steps involved," Vogts says.

Vogts also reports that teaching English literature class "blended" with project management has resulted in students with greater ownership of their projects and increased excitement. "Students were given an assignment to make their own test. One student was so happy with what she created she wanted to tell me why I should make my tests like hers," Vogts says. "Seeing that pride is one of the things I find most satisfying about teaching project management."
Blended courses not only provide teachers with a real-world approach to a topic, they also allow students to enroll in two courses taken simultaneously in the same classroom. Not only is this efficient, but it also presents learning in a context of increased relevance and meaning. Project management is part of 12 College and Technical Education (CTE) Pathways (career areas), and because this initiative has satisfied state requirements for CTE funding, these blended courses are attractive and accessible to even small school districts. With all public educational systems managing tight budgets, PMIEF donors are contributing to increasing the value of public education.

“Since many of the schools plan to blend the project management technical course skills with core academic requirements in English, the Kansas implementation of project management will reach all high school students eventually,” McCrory says. “We won’t get all 283 school districts across the state to use the PMIEF content immediately, but the statewide initiative will continue to be implemented in more districts as time goes on.”

There is one more reason why this initiative is poised for success in helping students prepare for careers. When McCrory had an opportunity to show the Project Management Toolkit for Teachers™ to employers at Cessna Aircraft Company and Northrop Grumman, a U.S. global aerospace and defense technology company, they commented that the content was very similar to what their technicians use. That’s a statement that bodes well for the benefit of exposing students to real-world tools for real-world success.


PMIEF Teacher Resources: http://pmief.org/learning-resources/resources-for-youth/teachers
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