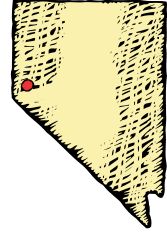


A+ Success Story



Expanding Alternative Education in Nevada

A+® Puts Online Learning Technology at Students' Fingertips

Admittedly, Washoe County School District's (WCSD) standards are high. Computer-based learning systems that were tried in WCSD's alternative high school programs proved less than satisfactory. WCSD is one of only about 200 school districts, colleges, and universities in the country that are ISO 9000 certified, and their objective was to standardize on a single online learning system for all their alternative high school programs.

"Washoe County School District has a total student population of about 63,000," says Jeff Wales, assistant principal in charge of adult programs at Washoe High School. "Our District includes the City of Reno, which has a diverse population of about 500,000. All our alternative high school programs are coordinated: adult programs, programs for students who are credit deficient or who have had discipline problems, as well as programs for students who are housed with the state agencies—students with drug and alcohol dependencies, for example. While we've seen budget cuts, as many districts have, we've felt for some time that online learning—with the right system, used properly—could help bring Washoe County High School to all students who want to use it."

At a Glance

District Location: Washoe County, NV

Challenge: Implement a single, standardized, online learning system for all of the District's Alternative High School programs

Solution: Internet browser-based A+LS implementation to provide learning access in school, at home, and at off-campus locations

Result: Excellent student response, increased enrollments, and a learning system tailored to each student's level

"We didn't originally intend to use A+LS for special education. But we tried it and the results were unexpectedly good."

– JEFF WALES, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

WASHOE MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL, RENO, NV

Making the Selection

The advantages of a single online learning system for all programs are appealing: the ability to reallocate resources in response to changes in program enrollments, technical simplicity and robustness, training efficiency, a shared language among teachers and administrators across all programs, and the option for students to transfer cleanly between programs. But to

serve students with varied backgrounds who are facing serious educational obstacles requires a learning system that could be customized down to the individual student level. "We want our alternative high school students in credit bearing classes," says Wales. "We don't just want to push them toward GED. We expect high school to be the foundation for whatever a student wants to pursue after graduating, whether that is a four-year college, technical school, or something else."

WCSD decided that their system needed to offer both online and on-site delivery. "That was important because we knew that some of our students do not have computers or an Internet connection, or they are not available all the time," notes Wales. "The on site labs give those students reliable access. We also knew that we needed to tailor the overall course content, and that the system needed to meet each student's preparedness level and learning speed. We did a lot of research, and the *A+nyWhere Learning System*® (A+LS™) was the best fit."

Implementing the Solution

“This is the first year that we are using *A+LS*,” says Wales. “Initially, we focused on the adult program. Our adults are working toward a state-accredited adult high school diploma. Adults are difficult to schedule. They have non negotiable demands on their time: children and jobs.” Not only does the system have to permit students to initiate learning sessions at times of their own choosing, but it has to allow students to break off a session and pick up conveniently in the same place later on. “That was a weakness in our previous system,” says Wales. “It required students to schedule long, unbroken blocks of time. We were seeing only four or five adult students logged on.” Wales reports vast improvement with *A+LS*: “We currently have 68 adult students using *A+LS*.”

“We also use *A+LS* in our non-adult alternative high school program, with 108 students enrolled full time and 87 enrolled part time,” says Wales. “About 30 of these students have already been issued credits. The students have responded quite well to the system. I’m pleased at the rate at which enrollments are increasing. *A+LS* is very interactive and the students take to it quickly.”

“We have a waiting list for seats in certain courses, such as government and computer literacy,” adds Wales. “We’re in the process of expanding capacity. As soon as it’s up and running, we’ll be using a Junior Achievement center to offer the computer literacy class. That kind of multiple use is welcome. It broadens our reach to different types of students and increases what we can get done in the same amount of time.”



Jeff Wales' key staff at Washoe HS implemented *A+LS* for over 250 students in just three months. (From left: Ellen McMichael, Tim Sullivan, Mary Sullivan)

“Technically, *A+LS* rolled out very smoothly,” says Wales. “AEC (The American Education Corporation) and Backbone Communications have been fantastic on the technical side. They work closely with us and everything they do is exactly to our specifications. I can only say that it’s been a great partnership.”

“We did have one surprise, though,” says Wales. “We didn’t originally intend to use *A+LS* for special education. But we tried it and the results were unexpectedly good. We modified the courses with special ed students in mind—more review questions, mostly—but the special ed students don’t need more help using the system than any of our other students do. I think that speaks to the quality of the *A+LS* instructional design: asking questions, introducing new material, then going back for review. The pre-assessments accurately match the material presented in the lesson to the student’s level of understanding, and the lessons let students see the material from different points of view, in different ways. For us, *A+LS* has shown itself to be an effective online learning system.”

About The American Education Corporation (AEC)

Early recognition of the national trend in school accountability, combined with an understanding of the impact of the Internet on education, has allowed AEC to become an industry leader in e-learning solutions. Few education companies offer the systemized combination of formative assessment, proven instruction, alignment to standards, and data management and reporting capabilities of AEC’s comprehensive courseware and learning management system.

The *A+nyWhere Learning System*[®] (*A+LS*[™]) software program is an e-learning[®] solution ideal for schools searching for more efficient ways to improve their instructional processes. The *A+LS* courseware program consists of an award-winning instructional management system supported by significant core curriculum content for grades K–12 and adult learners delivered through a local area network (LAN), a wide area network (WAN), or the Internet. The research-based curriculum content is in the subject areas of Reading, Mathematics, Language Arts, Science, Writing, and Social Sciences. This curriculum is linked to state standards and combined with valuable formative assessment tests designed to guide instruction throughout the school year — as well as give school administrators the data they need to ensure maximum student performance.

Would you like to learn more about the *A+nyWhere Learning System*?

Give us a call at 800.480.3935 to arrange a custom product demonstration with Backbone Communications, your local licensed product reseller.

You can also check us out on the web at www.BackboneCommunications.com