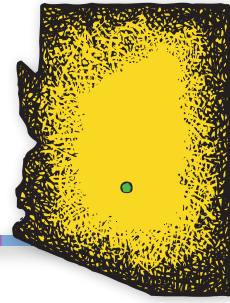


A+ Success Story



Preparing to Excel

How an Arizona charter school shifted gears, increased test scores, and met state standards.

The Noah Webster Basic School in Mesa, Arizona had a challenge faced by many schools today: to raise their test scores and better utilize the Arizona Articulated Standards in instruction. This 11-year-old charter school had always focused on the basics and followed the state academic standards with their 1,200 Pre-K through 6th grade students, but they wanted to do better. During the 2003-2004 school year, Director Kelly Wade decided to look for a computer-based program that would help them increase scores as well as meet state standards. After researching various instructional courseware programs, the school chose the *A+nyWhere Learning System*[®] (*A+LS*[™]) courseware program from American Education Corporation (AEC).

“We liked that the lessons offered in *A+* were extremely appealing and fit the educational philosophy of our school.”

— GAIL SODERQUIST,
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR,
NOAH WEBSTER SCHOOL, MESA, AZ

The first important step to integrating the courseware into the school curriculum was to make sure their teachers were trained in the courseware. They then hired a full-time teacher, Gail Soderquist, to supervise the program in the lab. Her responsibilities as program administrator included monitoring student lessons, assisting teachers with reports, and making sure students stayed on track while using the program.

There were many features that convinced Noah Webster that the *A+* courseware would help the school achieve

At a Glance

School Location: Mesa, Arizona

Challenge: Raise test scores and better utilize the Arizona Articulated Standards in instruction.

Solution: Network deployed implementation of the *A+nyWhere Learning System* for formative assessment, instruction, and comprehensive reporting in a computer lab environment.

Result: Positive student and teacher participation led to increased test scores over the past two years and an “Excelling” rating on the state level for the AIMS test.

their goals. “We liked that the lessons offered in *A+* were extremely appealing and fit the educational philosophy of our school,” says Soderquist. “The lessons were based on the Arizona Standards, it was user friendly, and competitively priced. We also liked the reporting system, so that teachers could keep track of how their students were progressing in the lessons.”

Custom Lessons Motivate Students

The Noah Webster Basic School deploys the *A+* software over the school network, which proved to be the best method for the school’s technology requirements. Students in grades 1–6 go to the computer lab and work on *A+* lessons once a week.



Kelly Wade and Gail Soderquist (seated) and with a student.

“Students enjoy the program because the lessons are assigned to them based on what they have already mastered and what they still need to learn,” says Soderquist. “They enjoy completing the lessons and having the little apples show up on their assignment lists. We keep track of how many apples a class earns each time they come to the lab, so there is a little competition that goes on. Some teachers reward their classes with special privileges or even parties for reaching certain goals.”

Starting the program this early with students helps them to be even more comfortable and confident in using it as they grow older.

— GAIL SODERQUIST,
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR,
NOAH WEBSTER SCHOOL, MESA, AZ

Teachers have been impressed with student achievement since using the courseware. For example, last year the second grade team began using the *A+* assessments as one of their main tools for measuring student progress throughout the year. At the beginning of the year, all of their students take the math, reading, and language assessments. At the end of the year, they take the same assessment again. Teachers were amazed at the dramatic increase in scores for many students.

“The assessment is a good tool to find out if a child is struggling with some concepts, and helps to reinforce those concepts,” says second grade teacher, Linda Vaughn. “It also gives them confidence when they’ve learned something in the classroom and they can apply it in the lab.”

First graders have also been enjoying the courseware. After learning the “Study, Practice, Test” routine, they eagerly work to master lessons so that they can accumulate the little apples on their screen. “There have been times when we’ve cheered for students as they added apples to their list,” says Soderquist. “Starting the program this early with students helps them to be even more comfortable and confident in using it as they grow older.”



Teacher Lori Kent works with a second grader on his *A+* lessons.

Accelerated students are also benefiting from the custom lessons. Because Noah Webster groups students by ability, there are classes that work at a higher level in the classroom on a daily basis. These students work at a higher grade level on *A+* for a greater challenge, and any student who masters lesson material can move up a level at any time.

Soderquist says teachers like the courseware because it helps reinforce the standards that are being taught in the classroom. She reports that teachers also like that they can see how their students are doing at any time by accessing reports. They can see what specific skill areas students are struggling with or are mastering, and can address those areas accordingly. The administrator, Kelly



Noah Webster students working in the *A+LS* courseware.

Wade, likes that the feedback teachers get benefit their classroom teaching, and the lessons directly address what students need to know to be successful on the AIMS (Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards) test.

Improving Test Scores, Meeting Goals

Since implementing the courseware, Noah Webster has watched test scores rise – in the past two years, they have achieved the “Excelling” rating at the state level on student performance on the AIMS tests. Soderquist believes

the standards-based lessons offered in the *A+* courseware really helped prepare their students to be successful on the AIMS tests.

The school plans to eventually have students use the courseware on a regular basis in their classrooms instead of just the computer lab. This plan will be put in to place as they acquire more computers for the classrooms.

“The assessment is a good tool to find out if a child is struggling with some concepts, and helps to reinforce those concepts.

It also gives them confidence when they've learned something in the classroom and they can apply it in the lab.”

— LINDA VAUGHN,
SECOND GRADE TEACHER,
NOAH WEBSTER SCHOOL, MESA, AZ

About 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

A+ Success Story

Noah Webster Basic School, Arizona