



## **Addressing the Needs of All Learners in Cobb County**

### *Using Online Resources to Provide Differentiated Instruction*

#### **Director of Instructional Technology Linda Morrell:**

"netTrekker d.i. provides support for teachers and students because it allows for diversification and differentiation of instruction."

#### **Instructional Lead Teacher Patti Aasen:**

"I use netTrekker d.i. because it lets me zero in on differentiated instruction for my students. I can be assured that the sites are safe and educationally appropriate. This is huge for me!"

#### **Gifted Education Teacher Cristin Kennedy:**

"netTrekker d.i. is a MUST HAVE for any classroom teacher."

Providing the resources that lead to improved student achievement is an important goal for educators today. Teachers must find learning materials that address the needs of all learners so that students reach their potential and administrators are assured that goals are met.

The Cobb County School District is the second largest school system in Georgia and the 30th largest in the United States, and it prides itself on excellence. It is a metropolitan district with a diverse population. More than 13,000 students have a non-English primary home language and one third of the students receive a free or reduced rate lunch.

### **Time and Accountability**

Cobb County is a leader in using exemplary web resources as instructional materials. Because major concerns for teachers and administrators are time and accountability, Director of Instructional Technology Linda Morrell provides netTrekker d.i. for teachers to find these resources. She says, "Using netTrekker d.i. means that teachers and students can find high quality, relevant resources quickly and efficiently and school leaders are assured that students use only the highest quality materials."

According to Gifted Education teacher Cristin Kennedy, "netTrekker d.i. has so many easy-to-use features that it is a time saver to find quality Internet resources. I do not have to sift through inappropriate material or resources that have either too high or low-grade level content for my students."

## **Meeting Standards**

Making sure that students are mastering curriculum standards is a priority for Cobb County. The district's curriculum standards are all online and resources must be aligned to them. Teachers know that when they use sites from netTrekker d.i., the materials will be aligned to the state curriculum and will lead students to master the standards. For example, sixth grade science teacher Cherie Young assigns an annual research project about the origin of the universe. Now that students use netTrekker d.i., they can easily find information about the Big Bang and learn what they need to meet their classroom and state objectives.

## **Assessment and Differentiation**

According to Morrell, "Teachers have data tools that provide access to student assessment information. Once they know where their students are academically, they have to plan for each child to master the standards." They've been trained to apply differentiation strategies and they use netTrekker d.i. to find resources to implement the levels of instruction that best meet their students' needs.

Differentiated instruction is very important for schools serving at-risk populations. With netTrekker d.i., a teacher can guide students to look for web sites written at one of five readability levels, which ensures that search results will be appropriate for each student's reading level. Knowing the readability level of online materials allows teachers to assign activities on the same topic but at various levels of difficulty.

For example, Patti Aasen, the Instructional Lead Teacher at Timber Ridge Elementary School, uses netTrekker d.i. to individualize instruction for third grade students whose assessments showed they were weak in vocabulary. She searches for vocabulary building sites according to readability and sorts them by reading level. Now students use these sites as a follow-up to guided reading groups to build their vocabulary.

The readability feature is also particularly helpful for English Language Learners, especially in Cobb County's high schools with ESOL populations. In the past it has been difficult for high school teachers to find content appropriate sites with high interest at lower readability levels. netTrekker d.i. has proven to be a time saver and resource for teachers of students with language needs.

## **Adaptable Solutions**

Growing districts need adaptable solutions. Today 104,656 students fill Cobb County's 110 schools and the population continues to grow by nearly 2,500 each year. While curriculum and standards are consistent throughout the district, teachers need to implement different styles and approaches to lesson design and delivery to reach all of their students. According to Linda Morrell, "netTrekker d.i. provides appropriate resources and support for EVERY teacher and student." As the population grows, netTrekker d.i. is helping the district meet new challenges with access to differentiated solutions.