



Questionmark Case Study

Online Learning and Questionmark™ Perception™ Give Failing Children a Second Chance

Scenario

Educators know that once a student falls behind and fails it's quite difficult to reintegrate him or her into the classroom. Understanding this challenge clearly, Chris Sherman, coordinator of the online academy for the El Paso (Texas) Independent School District, decided that rather than having already overworked teachers try to spend more time with these challenging students, he would provide them with an opportunity to take remedial courses outside the classroom.

"Let's say a student fails a lesson or a section of a math class; he just wasn't understanding a concept," Sherman says. "That student will have difficulty going on, because future lessons are based on the assumption that the student has mastered this concept. Immediate intervention is critical, and it is important to do it without stealing valuable time from the regular classroom."

Solution

The El Paso Schools' online academy provides an academic safety net for struggling students. Students can enroll in online courses, taking interactive lessons about the material that they didn't master in the classroom. Once the concepts have been mastered, teachers can adjust a student's grade to reflect the student's progress. The goal is simple: if students *want* to pass they *can* pass. Currently the academy offers English courses, algebra, physical science, chemistry, and world geography.

Tests that students take when completing a course unit must, of course, still be graded. Sherman realized that in order to not bog teachers down with this extra work the academy would need a computerized testing and reporting system. He decided to use Questionmark Perception to assess how students were doing.

"It meets all our assessment needs," Sherman commented "It's seamless for the kids. They connect to Perception through a link right in the program. They click on it and it launches the test."

Since Perception's randomizing function allows the schools to vary the questions on each test, the academy has created a database of hundreds of questions. Making each test different minimizes cheating.

The teachers also like the grade book feature that enables them to view and calculate final grades based on several assessments. This report includes the ability to weight individual test scores so they contribute more or less to the final grade. "

Sherman also uses Perception to create what he calls video guides, in which students view a film or video and then answer questions about it. The program makes it possible for students to view streaming video in one portion of the screen and answer questions about it on another portion, simultaneously. If the students get behind they can pause the video, finish answering the question, and then push "play" to continue.

Results

The early results have been impressive. At one school for example, fifteen students enrolled and eleven passed. What makes that result so positive is that the learners in the courses are at-risk students who are already in a cycle of failure.

Sherman is justly proud of the fact that the academy is able to rescue those who are willing to give school a second chance.

More information

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