



Questionmark Case Study: The Arkansas Department of Workforce Education

Online assessments do more than just measure student knowledge; they also provide statistics to support federal funding.

Background

There are hundreds of vocational programs in the state of Arkansas: classes at high schools, technical schools, and career centers, in subjects like auto mechanics, welding, or computer-aided drafting. Each year, tens of thousands students take these classes. To test their progress and document it for funding purposes, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education uses Questionmark™ Perception™ to create, schedule and administer those tests securely.

The Challenge

In previous years, the department administered its tests via paper and pencil. The data had to be reported to the federal government, but teachers often forgot to mail in students' assessments. Students also often input their social security numbers incorrectly or filled out their answers in a manner that lost data. These errors meant that 20 percent of the data gathered was unusable.

More Data at Lower Cost

Perception has allowed the department to gather far more data – nearly 98 percent – that is valid and reportable. Because online assessments require less work than paper-and-pencil assessments, it also saves the state money on personnel.

At the end of each vocational course, each student must take an assessment of 60 multiple-choice questions. With 33 courses and many students in multiple courses all across the state, the department administers 30-60,000 assessments each year.

Safeguarding Federal Funding

The assessments show what students learned, of course, but the results from those assessments also help programs to safeguard their Perkins funding. The federal government requires, among other things, that educational programs which receive funding must report on the effectiveness of those programs. By demonstrating that the scores reported for a course improve every year, each program gets to keep the money coming in with which to make further equipment or curriculum purchases.

Custom-Built Portal

Questionmark Consulting Services helped the department build a Web site with a registration system that integrates with Perception. This allows the department to manage the hundreds of teachers at the vocational programs, who can schedule their classes and associate assessments with those classes. Teachers use the system to register students for classes and to schedule their assessments. All assessments are password-protected and delivered via Questionmark Secure—which makes it impossible to switch tasks or print assessments—so that students can only take each test once.

The consulting unit also created a custom-built error tracking system that helps teachers report problems with tests or scheduling, and customized reports that show how well students did on each question and topic area. These reports show instructors whether they need to adjust their teaching in a topic, and the department uses them to make sure that test questions are written clearly and coded with the right answers.

By automating both registration and scheduling of tests, the custom system saves time the department used to spend creating 24,000 schedules.

Streamlining

Perception has vastly improved the process of testing and data reporting that helps guarantee Perkins funding for schools all over Arkansas. Teachers can test students in small or large groups, and students can easily catch up if they miss a test. It has boosted both the number of students tested and the amount of usable data.

More information

Questionmark Contact:

Email: info@questionmark.com

Phone: (800) 863-3950 • (203) 855-4500

Web: <http://www.questionmark.com/>

