



CASE STUDY

Jurupa Unified School District

ASCD ACTIVATE PROVIDES SELF-DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ALIGNED WITH DISTRICT INITIATIVES

Professional Learning Model: ASCD Activate

Focused Areas of Need: Differentiated Instruction; Poverty and Equity; Research-Based Instructional Practices; Inclusion; ELL

Type: Medium District

OVERVIEW

In 2017, Jurupa Unified School District (JUSD) partnered with ASCD to provide subscriptions to the ASCD Activate Professional Learning Network to help the district's educators learn the necessary skills and knowledge to implement new districtwide initiatives. This high-quality, on-demand, and cost-effective learning platform grants teachers access to ASCD's publications, online courses, videos, and other resources without reducing time away from the classroom. The goals for JUSD's partnership with ASCD included the following:

- Providing on-demand, in-depth professional development information about a variety of teaching and learning practices to address educators' self-identified learning needs and challenges.
- Granting access to targeted resources aligned with the school district's new initiatives and priorities through customized ASCD Activate channels.
- Offering facilitated user training to prepare educators to use the ASCD Activate platform.

“

[ASCD Activate] has met the needs of our teachers.

– John Allen, instructional coach, Jurupa Unified School District

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BACKGROUND

JUSD is located in Riverside County, the fourth largest county in California. JUSD operates 17 elementary schools, five middle schools, three comprehensive high schools, two continuation high schools, a community day school, an online academy, and an adult education program.

The school district launched a series of initiatives designed to improve teaching and learning. “The major need at the time, and probably our biggest challenge as far as getting training, is social-emotional learning and the needs of children that come from backgrounds of trauma,” says John Allen, instructional coach, Jurupa Unified School District. The school district is also focusing on eliminating education bias among specific subgroups that may be underperforming, says Allen.

Currently, 79 percent of JUSD students qualify as low income (LI) students (as reported in the JUSD LCAP 2018-19). “Students from low income homes may live in stressed environments. For students’ basic needs to be met for higher student achievement, their social-emotional needs must first be addressed,” says Allen. “Most teachers do not receive formal training in working with LI students, so it is up to our district to train teachers with the effective teaching skills needed to provide trauma-informed teaching while delivering core content.”

Allen explains that the district is also focusing on the needs of African American and Latino subgroups, especially in the area of student discipline. “Currently, these subgroups have a higher rate of suspension and expulsion than others in our district. The student behaviors associated with the suspension or expulsion may be a direct result of their reaction to being stressed while in class (e.g., fight, flight, freeze) that cause them to act out,” says Allen.

“Rather than the teacher reacting with a trauma-informed practice, such as restorative practices or positive behavior interventions and support, the teacher reacts with a confrontation—sometimes due to implicit or explicit bias—that ends in a conflict and suspension,” says Allen.

Additional district priorities include working with English language learners, increasing teacher collaboration around formative assessments for collective efficacy, reading intervention programs, and differentiation of instruction.

After negotiating the terms of the new districtwide initiatives, the teachers’ union and the school district determined that teachers needed to have access to

DISTRICT PROFILE

JURUPA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

- **19,112** Students
- **86%** Hispanic
- **8%** White
- **1%** African American
- **1%** Asian
- **.27%** Pacific Islander
- **.38%** Filipino
- **31%** English language learners
- **10%** Receiving special education services
- **79%** Socioeconomically disadvantaged

on-demand professional development programs to prepare them for the upcoming changes. JUSD teachers wanted a professional learning resource that would allow them to remain in the classroom while offering in-depth knowledge and training. After researching several providers, the district found that ASCD Activate was a viable option to meet the negotiated agreement’s terms.

ASCD has a long history of providing resources to help educators work with impoverished students and deal with issues of equity and bias in the classroom. For JUSD’s educators who sought to implement systematic changes across the district, working from the same knowledge base could prove extremely beneficial.

ASCD SOLUTION

ASCD Activate grants teams access to a full year’s supply of evidence- and research-based digital materials that are designed to fit into busy educators’ schedules. The platform’s objective is to make professional learning engaging and collaborative without being time-consuming or cost prohibitive. Educators can also use the platform to strengthen existing professional learning communities or

connect to a larger online network of colleagues who are also committed to growing their practice.

“ASCD Activate provides the ability to engage an entire district at a relatively low cost,” says Alan Hall, senior director, Product Management, ASCD. The wide variety of self-paced material, learning strategies, and multipart courses gives learners options depending on how they want to learn and how deeply they wish to study a particular focus area.

ASCD Activate provides access to weekly, monthly, and quarterly publications such as ASCD’s flagship magazine *Educational Leadership*; a library of ASCD e-books by internationally renowned authors, experts, and educators; teacher-driven articles, videos, and rubrics on the ASCD myTeachSource® platform; a vast collection of classroom videos featuring effective teaching practices and award-winning experts and educators through the PD In Focus® online

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application; webinars; and self-paced online courses through PD Online® web-based multimedia training programs. The platform covers a vast array of topic areas, including assessment, classroom management, curriculum design, differentiated instruction, English language learners, poverty, school culture and climate, and social-emotional learning.

JUSD partnered with ASCD for a one-year subscription to ASCD Activate. The Activate channels were customized to align with the school district’s needs. “ASCD Activate has flexibility and options,” says JUSD’s John Allen.

Initially, JUSD planned to offer access to certificated staff only, but soon discovered they were able to provide access for classified staff without any extra cost. “That doubled our capacity to be able to offer quality resources for everyone,” says Allen.

To start the implementation process, ASCD worked with Allen to produce a profile of the school district, which included learning more about the student population, challenges, successes, culture, best practices, and the district’s priorities and goals for the coming year.

ASCD provided video training for JUSD’s principals and administrators and offered guidance to help teachers use the platform in a collaborative learning environment. The administration then used that knowledge to conduct teacher training. In addition, ASCD provided video training that linked teachers across 16 school sites with an ASCD facilitator who offered guidelines on how to use ASCD Activate to determine and address their learning needs. The video training “was pretty revolutionary for us,” says Allen. “It was seamless.”

To optimize the resources in ASCD Activate’s innovative platform, users must first identify their professional learning goals. During the ASCD Activate user training, the facilitator encouraged participants to think about what problems they faced in the classroom and in their schools, what they wanted to learn, and what problems of practice they wanted to address with professional development. Then, participants were encouraged to create a learning plan they could implement using the ASCD resources available on the platform.

“By using Activate and the digital training methods, we are giving educators access to this great content that they can use to become better in their profession, and we are able to do it in an extremely efficient way for the district without a significant additional cost,” says Allen.

Using ASCD Activate offered JUSD a two-pronged approach to professional development: educators could address their own individual learning needs at their own pace and they could work together in teams to learn new strategies and delve into research.

RESULTS

Focusing on social-emotional learning was a high priority for the school district, making ASCD Activate an effective resource. Educators could read the ASCD book *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* by Maurice J. Elias and others and *Handling Student Frustrations* by Renate Caine and Carol McClintic. They could also access relevant webinars, including “The Formative Five” with Thomas Hoerr; “Social and Emotional Learning: Policy and Practice” with David Griffith, Melissa Mellor, and the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy; and “Inspiring the Best in Your Students” with Jonathan C. Erwin.

Inclusion and differentiated instruction have become major focuses for JUSD. “We are meeting

the needs of all students because we are moving towards more inclusive practices,” says Allen. “We are placing special education students in general education classrooms more often, at a higher rate and a higher percentage. So when students come in, [we need to think about] what is the teacher going to do differently to meet their needs?” says Allen. This year, JUSD started revising its special education intervention program with the upper grades and hired new staff to accommodate the updated model. Allen notes that ASCD Activate’s extensive resources on the inclusion of special education students in the general education setting, in particular, were useful in supporting districtwide rollout of the model.

ASCD Activate provided professional development to support the school district’s interest in developing educators’ internal capacity to understand and address the equity and mindset behaviors posing teaching and learning challenges. “With the resources in PD In Focus, teachers can get background knowledge on working with students from poverty and with students that are in trauma to be able to negate that in the classroom,” he adds. The need for this training “impacts every teacher and every student in the classroom,” says Allen. Training involving small group instruction and guided reading were also districtwide initiatives.

Since using ASCD Activate was voluntary and self-directed, educators had the option to use the tool to

deepen their learning. As negotiated by the teachers’ union, the high-quality tools were both easily available and aligned with educators’ needs.

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- John Allen, instructional coach, Jurupa Unified School District

“[During Year 1], it has met the need that was called for contractually and professionally. It has really met the needs of our teachers and our classified staff,” says Allen. JUSD has contracted for a new year of the ASCD Activate service.

ASCD Activate also allows principals to provide online learning assignments to their teams. For example, as site administrators, principals can assign their team videos or other projects using the platform. Allen notes that principals find the option useful.

“ASCD Activate allows principals to locate research-based resources aligned to our initiatives and offer them to teachers or other staff in a menu of options for staff to access, such as videos, articles, webinars, or discussion forums,” says Allen. “Staff can then engage in the resources at their convenience and become better-informed educators. The ability to create custom channels for staff in PD In Focus really helps instructional leaders narrow down the best resources for them at the time and make them readily available.”

Teacher response to ASCD Activate has been positive, says Allen. For teachers, he adds, having the ability to use ASCD Activate to find new strategies and research “is probably the most powerful thing that we can offer for them—to be self-sufficient, self-reliant—in choosing their own path for PD.”

