



Microsoft® Office Specialist

Helps simplify budgeting and gives high school test takers a second chance

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Success Story



WESTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL

Location:

Westlake Village, California

Total School Enrollment:

2,400 students

Program enrollment:

100 students

Success Metrics:

- Satisfies requirements for Perkins Grant
- Distinguishes students post-high school
- Creates parental excitement and involvement



CLASSROOM LICENSE HELPS CALIFORNIA PARTNERSHIP ACADEMY SATISFY STATE REQUIREMENTS

CHALLENGE

The Westlake Information Technology Academy (WIT) is a California Partnership Academy that combines high quality academic instruction with work-based learning experiences. WIT is a unique “school within a school” at Westlake High School near Thousand Oaks, California.

As part of the Academy’s mission to provide a more specialized and personalized high school

experience through this program, every WIT student must achieve an industry certification such as Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) to fulfill the State of California’s Partnership Academy requirements.

However, MOS Administrator David Tyler has faced a significant challenge meeting these requirements at Westlake High School – budgeting for student certification exams.

While a large majority of WIT Academy students pass the MOS exam easily on their first attempt, a few need extra review sessions to brush up on the skills they need to pass the exam. The pressure of passing the exam on the first try gets the best of some test takers, and Tyler estimates that approximately 10 percent of WIT students end up having to retake the exam.

“Certification is a big deal for a lot of these kids and sometimes they get a little anxious,” Tyler added.

Budgeting for the right number of exam vouchers was challenging without knowing exactly how many students would need to retake the exam, and Tyler did not like making some students wait to take the MOS exam for the second time.

“We had to buy the exam vouchers in blocks,” said Tyler. “We had a few vouchers to accommodate the students who didn’t pass the first time, but when we ran out, the students had to wait until the next semester to take the exam again when additional funds became available.”

SOLUTION

In order to eliminate the hassle of counting vouchers and allow students to take MOS exams more than once without feeling added pressure, Tyler and the WIT Academy took advantage of Certiport’s MOS Classroom License. The Classroom License simplifies budgeting by allowing Westlake High School to administer a high volume of exams for one flat annual fee.

“We are relieved we don’t have to go out and purchase additional vouchers anymore to get students certified,” Tyler said. “Knowing they have another opportunity to take the exam also

Microsoft® Office Specialist

"The [Microsoft Office Specialist] exams fulfill the Perkins grant competency requirements that all students perform to a certain level."

– **David Tyler, Microsoft Office instructor at Westlake High School**

helps students feel more comfortable and confident."

The WIT academy also takes advantage of Carl Perkins grant funding for the MOS program through the California Partnership Academy. The Perkins grant requires detailed reporting, and Tyler tracks and submits student progress to federal education authorities through certification exam scores.

"The MOS exams fulfill the Perkins grant competency requirements that all students perform at a certain level," Tyler said.

Dr. Laurie Looker, a school-to-career coordinator with the Conejo School District, is responsible for WIT and other Academy and Career Technical Education programs in the district. She uses the certification pass-rate data supplied by Tyler for her report to the California Department of Education to ensure grant funding continues.

"We receive federal money through Perkins funding," Looker said. "In order to receive this funding, industry certification must be part of the Career Technical Education curriculum."

RESULTS

During their first year in the WIT Academy, students have the option to earn up to four MOS certifications: Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Access. According to Tyler, students who complete their demanding class work and practice with Certiprep™ test preparation software for Microsoft Office 2007 are generally prepared and successful when they sit for an exam. Tyler's students have achieved more than 80 certifications since the beginning of the 2009/2010 school year.

Once students earn their first certification, Tyler says the excitement builds to achieve many more. WIT students also feed off their parents' enthusiasm for certification. Parents recently held a fundraiser to help pay for the Classroom License at Westlake High School. "Parental involvement and excitement for MOS certification has been one of the keys to growing the WIT Academy," said Tyler. "When you get parent support, it's a win-win for everybody."

The 2010/2011 school year was the first that WIT Academy had a waiting list for students who wanted to join the program. Tyler believes interest in the program has piqued partially because students have the opportunity to earn more certifications with the Classroom License.

Sophomore Melissa Clark recently finished the school year with three Microsoft Office Specialist certifications. She said her skills and credentials are preparing her for life beyond high school.

"I now have the skills to organize data and create compelling PowerPoint presentations so I can be successful in college, and can have a job in the technology-friendly world of medicine," Clark said.

Dr. Looker believes the ultimate benefit of certification lies in distinguishing Westlake graduates from their peers. "Students who receive certification are leaving school with a valuable skill set that will help them gain employment and prepare them to use the technology that is required in their post-secondary education. Mastering these skills gives them an advantage over non-certified individuals."

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