



Enhancing student engagement and improving teaching and learning in Gwinnett County Public Schools

SPLOST approval paves way for eCLASS launch

On November 8, Gwinnett voters approved the extension of the special purpose local option sales tax for education. With nearly 50% of the money collected from the SPLOST extension allocated for technology projects, the approval paved the way for the district's eCLASS initiative, a digital content, learning, assessment, and support system. *So what is eCLASS and what is the district doing to prepare for the launch of this major initiative?*

Think of eCLASS as an umbrella under which you will find existing technology resources and projects, as well as a number of new resources that will help enhance student engagement and the teaching and learning process. It will bring together curriculum and instructional resources, assessment items, professional development, student information, and gradebook functions in one place, making it easier for teachers to access tools that will help them improve student learning.

Imagine a time when a teacher can enter eCLASS through the employee portal and access instructional calendars, resources for lessons, assignments for students who need enrichment or extra help, quizzes and tests that automatically populate the gradebook, analytics that show the teacher how students are doing on specific AKS, and much, much more. Imagine students being able to access assignments and academic help anytime, online. Imagine a classroom that allows technology to permeate the education of learners and where digital tools expand the walls of the classroom, fostering collaboration and nurturing creativity and innovation in students and teachers. This is the vision for eCLASS once it is fully developed and implemented.

This integrated enterprise solution is a multi-year initiative. And, while the pilot is set to begin in August 2012 with schools in the **Archer**, **Berkmar**, **Duluth**, **North Gwinnett**, and **Shiloh** clusters, this systemwide initiative is one that everyone needs to be aware of because pieces of it will touch all schools as early as next year. A lot of groundwork is being laid now as the district pilots online textbooks, scouts out digital content, and works to ensure the technology infrastructure is in place to support the eCLASS environment.

- In September, the Gwinnett County Board of Education approved a five-year contract with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) publishers for the purchase and implementation of software in conjunction with the district's eCLASS initiative.

- The first component of eCLASS that will be rolled out will be the instructional component. For several months, school district staff members have been reviewing and testing a HMH software application called Pinpoint. GCPS data and resources are being uploaded into Pinpoint and are being tested by Information Management (IMD) staff and instructional leaders to ready the instructional component for Gwinnett teachers.
- In addition to the Curriculum and Instruction component that will be piloted this coming fall, GCPS is investigating the possibility of rolling out the gradebook function to all schools in August 2012.
- District leaders are studying different options for the professional development component of eCLASS. An integration of this component with Pinpoint will help employees better manage and align their staff development needs, from managing requirements and aligning data to professional learning opportunities to delivering quality professional learning (online, face-to-face, and blended) and linking professional learning plans to overall job performance.
- The eCLASS Design School Advisory Group— comprised of principals, assistant principals, teachers, and local school technology team members— has met twice already and will continue to meet throughout the design and development phases of the project. Group members already have reviewed demonstrations of the curriculum and instruction and gradebook modules of eCLASS, providing feedback on these resources
- Focus groups of teachers and administrators are meeting, providing feedback on the products and their functionality.
- As part of Leadership meetings, principals will discuss throughout 2012 how to more fully integrate technology into teaching to transform the classroom.
- The eCLASS training calendar is being finalized and will be shared in early 2012. This will help teachers know what training is required and when it will be available. Training efforts are focusing on the pilot schools to begin with but will expand to include other schools as the pilot grows.
- IMD will start work on the next phase of retrofits to update the infrastructure at middle schools, beginning in February. In addition, in January, construction on the wireless overlay (switches and access points) will begin in the eCLASS pilot schools. The work to provide a robust wireless infrastructure is an important step as the district looks to increase student access to technology.

In the coming months, there will be more to report about eCLASS... details about the different components that will make up eCLASS, training schedules, resources for teachers, pilot updates, etc. So stay connected. One way you can do so is to send in your questions about eCLASS. The district has set up an eCLASS e-mail address in Lotus Notes— eCLASS@gwinnett.k12.ga.us— through which employees can submit their questions. These submissions will be used to update the district's Q&A on eCLASS.

