



# Aligning Digital Reading Resources to Curriculum Objectives

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Reading is the key to learning. The more students read, the more efficient they become. The more access they have to a rich supply of high-interest reading materials, the more they read. Because reading on digital devices comes naturally to this generation of learners and incorporates many benefits they value, such as convenient 24/7 access, **districts are leveraging their investments in technology to use eBooks and other digital resources to improve students' reading proficiency, frequency, and achievement.**

### INTRODUCTION

Technology provides the means to help students read more, and more frequently, with greater comprehension. Schools and districts are investing in 1:1, BYOD, and shared solutions so that students have access to the tools they need for 21st-century learning.

To leverage their investment in devices, many schools and districts need a huge collection of eBooks, audiobooks and other digital resources in all subject areas and an easy-to-use solution that offers access for school and home use so that learning can happen anytime and anywhere, online or offline.

### READING FOSTERS INDEPENDENCE AND LIFELONG LEARNING

One of the critical responsibilities schools have is to teach students to read—and read well—so they develop a lifelong love of reading and the ability to learn independently. Maintaining traditional school and classroom libraries of novels, nonfiction books, and other resources is costly, inefficient, and outdated. But technology now offers an affordable solution for providing the best reading resources for 21st-century schools and learners.

Reading literature helps young people understand the nuances of human behavior, and understanding content area texts improves students' ability to decode complex information. For example, mathematics is incomprehensible to those who are unable to read and analyze mathematical logic in word problems. To improve their performance on local

and standardized tests in all subject areas, students need to master reading skills such as decoding, comprehension, analysis, and retention. To perfect these skills and achieve their full potential, students need access to resources. Teachers can help students acquire knowledge and increase performance in all content areas when they have 24/7 access to eBooks, audiobooks, eTextbooks, and other digital materials.

[The Common Core State Standards](#) state, "To be ready for college, workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize and report on information and ideas; to conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and non-print texts in media forms old and new."

“Now, instead of having a collection of print books that stay in the classroom or a library of novels that are not aligned to standards, we have thousands of texts that can be accessed 24/7 by all of our students, no matter where they are. We are getting kids to read more and more.”

— Kahle Charles, St. Vrain Valley School District

In addition, the Standards say that these skills “are necessary and important components of an effective, comprehensive reading program designed to develop proficient readers with the capacity to comprehend texts across a range of types and disciplines.”

According to [\*The Impact of Trade Books on Reading Achievement\*](#), “The more students read, the more likely they are to develop a lifelong love of reading and learning.” Research shows that “students who read daily, both in and out of school, have higher reading scores than students who read less often. The more students read, the better their vocabulary, their ability to read, and their knowledge of the world. Giving students the opportunity to choose from a wide selection of reading materials in their favorite genres and topics develops the wonder and joy of reading that can only be derived from reading.”

With reading so critical, access to resources is essential. Technology can provide the solution. Today almost all materials are available digitally. With 24/7 access to these resources, students can improve performance in all content areas.

Accordingly, the features that districts look for when choosing the best solution

to prepare students for the future with rich reading resources include top content from leading publishers, a cost-effective district/school model, device compatibility and expert support for deep integration and implementation.

### **SURPRISING BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL MATERIALS**

Digital content provides significant instructional and practical advantages. [The State Educational Technology Directors Association \(SETDA\)](#) says, “Digital materials provide many teaching and learning benefits to educators and students. They can be updated more quickly than traditional print materials, may be adapted to address students’ learning differences and styles and can offer interactive functions that pique student interests.”

“It is hard to provide everything students could want in one print collection,” says Faye Hagerty, director of library services for the North East Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas, “but online collections allow us to provide far more options.”

EBooks, with features such as audio narration, options to add notes and bookmarks, text highlighting, and





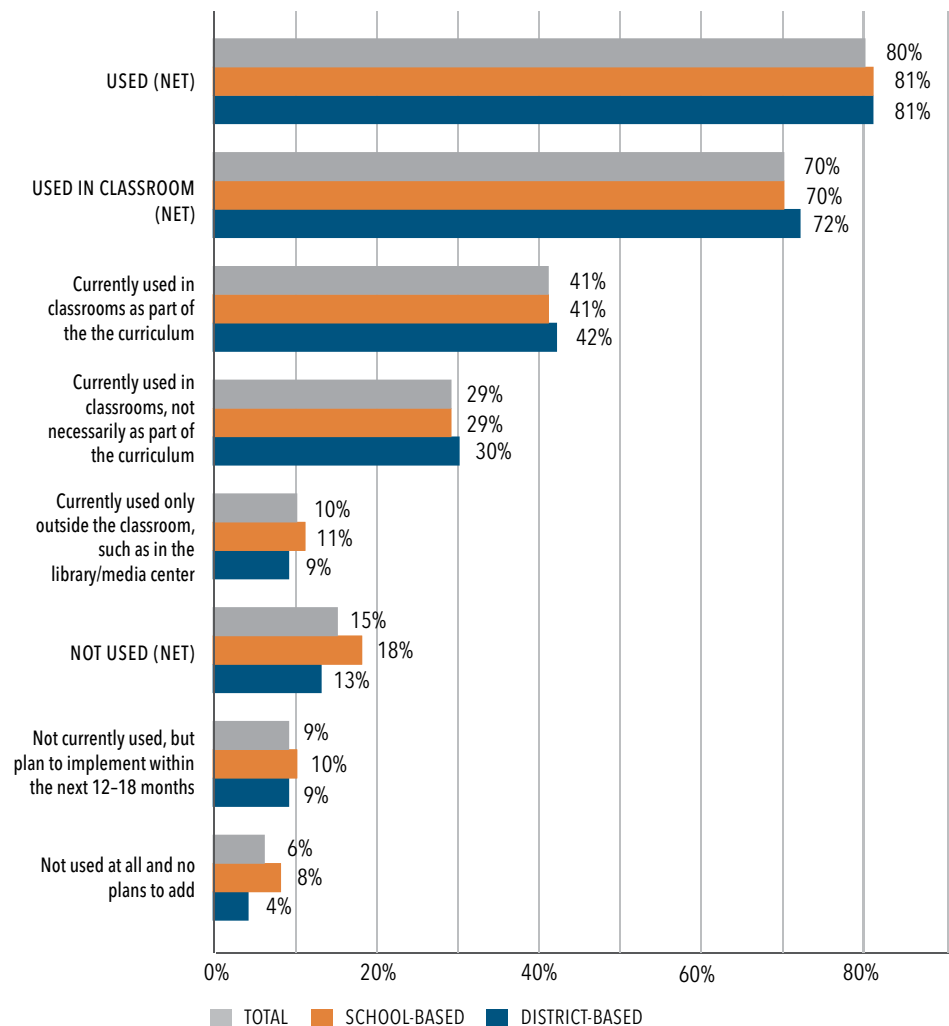
access to definitions and explanations, can help readers at all levels. In addition, elements such as text size and screen contrast can be adjusted. When students have access to all of these helpful tools and can choose from a wide range of texts that interest them, they're motivated and will read on their own. And this kind of independent practice results in improved reading skills.

For example, students at Heim Middle School in Williamsville, New York, who are never without their 1:1 devices, begin each day with a 20-minute independent

reading session using eBooks from OverDrive. Library Media Specialist David Sala says this “affords privacy to students who may be reading a title below grade level or one that deals with a sensitive personal issue.”

ASCD and OverDrive recently conducted an online survey among school- and district-based administrators about the use of, and attitudes toward, digital content in classrooms. The report, [Digital Content Goes to School](#), underscores the fact that use of digital content—such as eBooks, audiobooks, and digital versions

#### DIGITAL CONTENT USAGE



Source: ASCD-OverDrive survey: Digital Content Goes to School

“Research shows that effective teachers use many different kinds of texts—essays, primary sources, fiction, scientific reports, inventories and so on—to help students learn in all subjects.”

— NCTE, *Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum*



of eTextbooks, novels, and nonfiction titles—continues to increase.

About 80 percent of the administrators surveyed are currently using digital content in a variety of ways, from embedding it in the curriculum to using it outside the classroom and everything in between. Another nine percent are planning to implement digital content in the next year or so. Among those already using digital content, 65 percent report that their school or district's replacement of print materials will increase next year.

Respondents identified the top three benefits of digital content as follows: digital content enables teachers to deliver individualized instruction and [differentiation](#), allows students to practice independently, and captures greater student attention and engagement. “As digital content continues to transform the classroom,” the report says, “the concept of a personalized, individual model of schooling becomes more feasible.”

Kahle Charles, executive director of curriculum for the St. Vrain Valley School District in Colorado, says, “We wanted students to have 24/7 access to both novels and nonfiction works. We also wanted to sort texts based on a student's interest, Lexile level and classroom curriculum.” OverDrive provided those options.

With online access, students are reading more. In North East ISD, the goal for their first year was to have a 100 percent increase in use of their OverDrive digital collection from the previous year. According to Faye Hagerty, “We actually increased usage by 200 percent in one year. Our usage has steadily increased every year since.”

### TRANSITIONING TO DIGITAL CONTENT

Schools are using new, low-cost devices and BYOD to expand technology's reach into classrooms. They're finding that digital resources boost long-term cost effectiveness because digital class sets can never be damaged, lost, or stolen, and a central access platform reduces the number of copies needed; they can even use shared collections to provide more titles across districts and schools.

[The National Council of Teachers of English \(NCTE\)](#) says that using a variety of materials improves reading. “Research shows that effective teachers use many different kinds of texts—essays, primary sources, fiction, scientific reports, inventories and so on—to help students learn in all subjects. By using these different genres, students learn multiple ways to approach reading.”

There are five key points for school districts to consider when adding digital

Librarians report the emergence of ‘secret readers’— students who may be hesitant to visit their physical school library to check out a title that appeals to their interests but who now enjoy the privacy and 24/7 access the digital collection offers.

resources or making the transition to eBooks and audiobooks.

1. A digital content strategy helps to determine which service will provide the best combination of materials.
2. Device compatibility means it's easy for teachers and students to access the digital content they need to use on all the devices they have—whether 1:1 or BYOD.
3. Return on investment gives the district control of the content, and a central platform provides access to the same titles.
4. Leveraging content ensures that teachers and students have access to a variety of different resources.
5. Because budgets are limited, a solution must be affordable, flexible, and charge only for content.

#### DIGITAL CONTENT ALIGNMENT PROMOTES CROSS-DISCIPLINE LEARNING

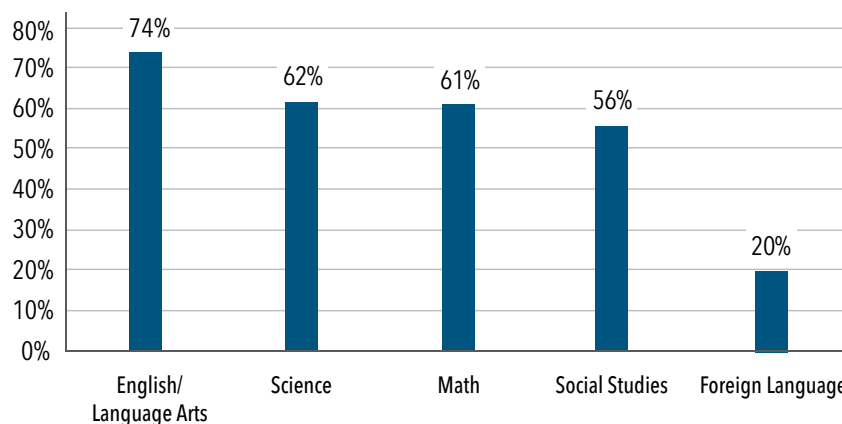
Digital content will enrich every classroom and curriculum. Even novels can spur scientific learning. For example, teachers around the country are using an edited version of the novel *The Martian* to teach concepts such as Isaac Newton's laws of motion, chemical reactions, and

spacecraft engineering, and to spark experiments like splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen. Students learn scientific thinking from this survival story, in which the protagonist has to solve complex problems in physics, chemistry, astronomy, and math.

In Utah, third, fourth, and fifth graders in six rural schools use OverDrive resources in Utah's Online Library to research, evaluate, write, and publish books online. For example, fifth graders at Valley Elementary in the Kane County School District did research on Utah's ecosystems and wrote reports. They spent time editing and revising, learning how to cite their sources and creating images and glossaries. The books are published in the schools' OverDrive library so that other students can download and learn from them. According to Media Mentor Chris Haught, “Students learn and practice many real-life skills such as researching, evaluating the information they read, and comparing multiple sources to determine their validity.”

In Napa Valley, California, students' Lexile scores have increased as a result of their sustained silent reading program. What makes the difference is access to

#### TEACHERS WANT DIGITAL CONTENT IN SUBJECT AREAS



Source: ASCD-OverDrive survey: Digital Content Goes to School

all of the resources through OverDrive. Teachers can select materials by grade level, Lexile scores, or topic. Students can highlight and take notes, which are skills they need to learn for testing. The technology ensures that they don't lose their place in books they're reading.

Napa Valley Unified School District likes the business model of having collections of books available by school level, but students

are not restricted to a set of books for their individual school. Because students are also able to download materials at school and access them at home, this solution addresses the problem of students not having connectivity at home.

Digital content—including eBooks, audiobooks, and eTextbooks—is a growing part of the curriculum. According to ASCD, teachers want digital materials in English

## RESOURCES THROUGH OVERDRIVE



### **Class Sets for English Language Arts**

Teachers can align the curriculum with key novels, drama, short stories, and poetry. These materials increase student engagement, and teachers report that more students read the book when it's offered digitally.



### **Informational Texts and Literary Nonfiction**

Teachers can align resources to units of study and access materials to support and improve nonfiction reading in social studies, science, math, electives, and other subject areas.



### **Supplemental Curriculum Materials**

Teachers can integrate resources, which include lessons and teacher tools, with standards-aligned units of study and performance assessments in all subject areas and grade levels.



### **Reference and Research**

Teachers can encourage research and skill development as students have access to reference titles in a wide variety of subjects.



### **Professional Development**

Teachers and administrators can engage with resources on literacy, leadership, instruction, and individual professional growth.



### **Study Guides and Test Prep**

Resources are available to provide additional preparation materials for everyday tests, AP testing, and college entrance exams.



### **Streaming Video**

Students can access titles in and outside of class on their devices to advance learning in science, social studies, English language arts, and electives.



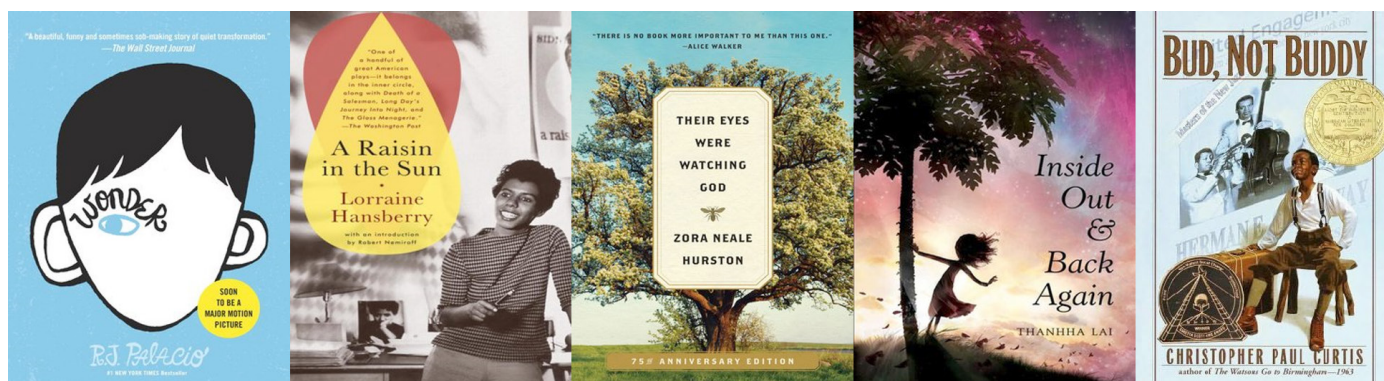
### **ELL and Foreign Languages**

English language learners (ELLs) and foreign language students can access eBooks and audiobooks in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and more.



### **Special Education**

Teachers can use audio and streaming video titles to enhance student understanding and provide content for Hi-Lo readers.



Digital class sets are eBook versions of the titles that serve as a cornerstone of the K-12 English language arts curriculum.

language arts (74%), science (62%), math (61%), social studies (56%), and foreign languages (20%).

States and districts have set standards for ensuring the quality of traditional materials. In most cases, digital materials—such as those available through OverDrive—are electronic versions of these approved materials.

Kahle Charles, at St. Vrain Valley School District, says, “Now, instead of having a collection of print books that stay in the classroom or a library of novels that are not aligned to standards, we have thousands of texts that can be accessed 24/7 by all of our students, no matter where they are. We are getting kids to read more and more.”

In addition, OverDrive provides help in selecting materials. St. Vrain’s English Language Arts Coordinator Kerin McClure says, “They help us identify nonfiction texts and primary resources that fit into our curriculum. We ask what they recommend on a certain topic and they prepare a collection for us to consider.”

### TRANSFORMING EDUCATION WITH SHARED COLLECTIONS

Shared eBook and audiobook collections enable two or more schools or districts to access more digital content for less with a

joint OverDrive platform. The advantages of this option include:

- ❖ All purchased titles are available to all participating schools or districts through a central access point.
- ❖ School and districts can add eBooks and audiobooks specifically for themselves that are separate from the shared collection.
- ❖ Titles are filtered by grade level to ensure that the right eBooks and audiobooks are reaching the right students.
- ❖ Content specialists are available to help select the best titles based on group, school, or district needs.

Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13, an education service agency supporting 22 public school districts (as well as nonpublic schools, preschools, adult learners, and more) in southern Pennsylvania, has a shared digital collection that registers thousands of checkouts per month. This collection, selected from OverDrive’s catalog of millions of titles for K–12, is focused on popular fiction for recreational reading.

“The moment we implemented OverDrive, it was one of the most popular instructional media services we have had for a really long time,” says Instructional Media and Technology Consultant Ken Zimmerman.



## ABOUT OVERDRIVE EDUCATION—A DIVISION OF OVERDRIVE

OverDrive Education is the leading provider of eBooks and audiobooks for grades K–12. It is the only 100% digital content solution, delivering a better way for a district or school to buy and use books. OverDrive's catalog provides 24/7 access to millions of eBooks and audiobooks from 5,000 publishers in all subjects, including digital class sets for English language arts. Titles are compatible with every major device, including laptops, ChromeBooks™, Kindles® (US only), iPhones®, iPads®, and Androids™. The system is easy to use because a central platform is tailored to a district's needs. The platform is available for individual buildings or districts, or even across districts, and flexible access models maximize budget dollars and usage. OverDrive currently serves over 14,000 districts and schools worldwide. For more information, go to [www.overdrive.com/schools](http://www.overdrive.com/schools).

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## ENABLING FLEXIBLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There's a short learning curve for users new to OverDrive, and OverDrive provides support to librarians and teachers to choose the most appropriate content for their digital collections. In addition, educators can access professional development titles for their own learning. Districts can create a central online resource to meet a school or district's professional development needs with digital content from OverDrive.

The same professional content printed by education publishers is now available 24/7 online so educators can review it on demand. Included in the OverDrive professional collections are selections covering critical topics such as literacy, leadership and instruction, and other resources aligned to

specific professional development goals. In the St. Vrain Valley School District, professional development resources were previously available only in a small library away from school facilities, which was inconvenient for educators. Once OverDrive was in place, titles were selected to align with instructional goals, and educators can now access them from any device, anywhere.

## CONCLUSION

Research shows how important reading skills are for students' intellectual development, and access to a large variety of materials is necessary for growth. Districts are providing 1:1 solutions in increasing numbers, and with 24/7 access to digital materials, students can find and read materials that are aligned with curriculum. eBooks, audiobooks, and other digital resources provide the kind of materials today's students need to increase reading frequency, improve comprehension, and build a lifelong love of reading and learning. And OverDrive provides the content, platform, and support districts need to move into 21st-century learning. ■

