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Delivering e-books and audiobooks effectively —and efficiently—to students and teachers

Easy access to a wide variety of digital content drives personalized learning

How do you build a digital reading platform that is easy for both students and teachers to use?

There are four main pillars to effective digital content implementation. One, you have to be easily able to get the top content that any student or teacher may be looking for. Two, it has to be easy to access and simple to use in the digital reading platform on any device and not require significant amounts of professional development and training. Three, there's the need for some kind of independent expert advice around selecting the content, as opposed to relying on one publisher versus another. Teachers and curriculum teams often don't have the time or the expertise to know and compare all the new releases and format options. Finally, the content has to be cost-effective over the long term.

What are the different models for content acquisition?

It comes down to institutional versus retail. The institutional model is school systems buying content centrally and then efficiently moving it to the right student, at the right time. In a retail model, you're buying content only for a specific student. That student can use it only on their respective digital device. When that student leaves the school, the school will soon need to repurchase that content. The institutional model is much more cost-effective over the long term.

Talk about flexible access models, since budget is always a concern with schools.

The No. 1 priority that everyone should be looking at is the usage of content invested in. We have to make sure that content is going efficiently to the right student at the right time. Otherwise, that content will be bought for one school and then just sit there, when it could be used by a student at another school. If we want to get more usage from content, we have to be able to move resources across schools, across districts or even, potentially, statewide.

We're seeing much more opportunity for school systems to pool funds to get access to more content.

What kind of impact can an integrated multimedia program have on English language arts (ELA)?

Teachers tell us all the time that when students can find the content the way they want it, they're much more likely to come to class having read the book. Students want to use their smartphone and other devices, and ELA has been one of the most impactful areas. The average ninth-grader isn't as excited to read in print as they are digitally. They can be reading on their smartphone, Chromebook or iPad with 24/7 access anytime, anywhere. They can also utilize their smartphone for listening to audiobooks. Think about the earbuds in students' ears, listening to something of quality.

What are the benefits of e-books and audiobooks for English language learners, Hi-Lo readers and reading per lexile level?

One of the key benefits of e-books and digital audiobooks is the easy access to a much larger selection of content. Students who have access to a wide variety of content that meets their specific needs can get much more personalized learning. Students can search for e-books and audiobooks within a digital reading platform based on their lexile level. This feature appeals to ELL students who appreciate the ability to search for nonfiction English e-books that meet their reading level, which likely does not match their grade level. In addition, privacy is much easier to preserve when using digital materials (for example, keeping private the Hi-Lo reader's book jacket).

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