

How digital Class Sets helped one North Carolina district reimagine required reading

Located just outside of Raleigh, North Carolina, Franklin County Schools (FCS) serves just over 7,900 students spread across eight elementary schools, four middle schools, three high schools and one early college facility.

Much like most districts across the U.S., FCS found itself at a crossroads at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Facing indefinite closures and logistical challenges, staff needed a new strategy to deliver learning resources to students in a safe, healthy and accessible way. Ultimately, they opted to partner with OverDrive Education to supply ebooks and audiobooks to students through the Sora student reading app.

“We had to ensure that our kids would still be able to have access to all of the material needed for our curriculum without actually having to return or give them all physical books, which we did not have access to. So we needed a nice safe and healthy way to distribute the information to students. And we used Sora to do that,” says Latoya Smith, a Literacy Specialist for Secondary Education at FCS.

Because FCS is a 1:1 district, every student already had the devices necessary to access both their assigned reading and pleasure reading titles available to them through the district’s digital collection.

Fast forward to three years later, and FCS’ commitment to digital remains strong, even now that schools have made a return to relative normalcy.

Sora is promoted in every digital learning center, and the platform has become an essential tool for both curriculum support and pleasure reading.

DIGITAL CLASS SETS ARE A DIFFERENCE-MAKER IN FCS CLASSROOMS

One crucial way that FCS has integrated Sora into everyday classroom use for middle school students is by leveraging the **Class Sets lending model**. Class Sets are short-term ebook rental options available through OverDrive Marketplace, Sora’s shopping and administrative portal. With Class Sets, educators can assign or provide titles on-demand to as many students as needed, with no minimum or maximum limit, and the cost is more affordable per-student than purchasing titles outright.

“Class Sets helped us change their approach to reading. We started off Sora in our middle schools with our **EL (Education) curriculum**. So all of our novel sets are pushed out to students through Sora,” says Smith. “We differentiate texts for honors students and exceptional students. We add in material for our honors students to read along with the material that some of our regular education students are reading, to enhance their understanding of the concepts that we’re teaching.”

Class Sets have also been important for providing accompanying material for students at lower reading levels, to ensure that they’re able to approach the same concepts at the level that best suits them.

HOW CLASS SETS BENEFIT FCS STUDENTS & EDUCATORS

According to Smith, cost isn't the only reason that Class Sets have become essential to learning at FCS. There are a few key benefits to digital books in general that make them an attractive option for classroom use.

Sustainable

"Digital books can't be destroyed — you would have to actually physically destroy the entire Chromebook. And it would still be live on your phone or another device. Students never forget their phones. So they're always prepared for class," says Smith.

Nor can students return titles early, meaning they'll never lose access to the book or their place in it.

(Plus, in the current era of staffing shortages, digital can help mitigate some of the time-consuming pressures of processing and managing physical materials. Ebooks and audiobooks are typically available within 24 hours of purchase, and can be pushed out automatically to students.)

Easily accessible

"Students can navigate Sora simply. Teachers never have an issue with logging in or out. And we've streamlined it so that as soon as they log in, they can not only see the material that they're currently reading, but they also get books that are pushed out to them," Smith says.

For FCS students, she notes that Sora has also become a key access point for pleasure reading, with students bringing their Chromebooks to lunch or study hall to read for enjoyment. "Our elementary students are absolutely reading tons and tons of hours each year on Sora, making sure that they are keeping up with the process, their reading levels and growing at the same time."

Dedicated support team

"We have an excellent support team," says Smith, noting that the FCS account team works closely with the district to ensure that they get what they need and that their needs are met. But what does this mean in practice?

With Sora, every school or district has access to a dedicated account team (including a credentialed librarian) that can help with the ins and outs of every day collection management, from curating book lists and recommending titles for purchase, to providing technical support and problem solving, to assisting with supplemental literacy initiatives like reading competitions and book clubs — and more.

AS READING RATES AND SCORES RISE, SORA IS A KEY LITERACY ASSET TO FCS

While FCS still primarily uses Class Sets across its middle grade students, steps have been made toward expanding. During the 2022-2023 school year, the district onboarded Class Sets to some of their grade 9 high school students.

Going forward, FCS will continue to leverage Sora for a mix of curriculum and pleasure reading, not only because it's popular with students, but because it's a hit with teachers, too.

"The response for Sora has really been amazing," says Smith. "Our scores have increased, our kids' reading has gone up, teachers are responding very well. They like the fact that they don't have to keep up with all of the books, or books being mishandled or torn apart. We don't have to worry about repurchasing copies all the time. We do have hard copies of books, but the fact that the kids have the book at their disposal, anytime they want, is an absolute asset."

LEARN MORE

Interested in hearing more about Latoya's story? Hear her tell it in [Reimagine Classroom Reading with Digital Class Sets](#), an on-demand webinar hosted in partnership with *Education Week*.

Find out more:
[Visit DiscoverSora.com/class-sets](https://DiscoverSora.com/class-sets)