

CHANGING THE GAME OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development Collections on GVRL: Learn how one district opened avenues for professional learning by investing in sustainable digital resources.

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Gayle Galligan, Ed.D.
Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum,
Instruction and Assessment
Deer Valley Unified School District
Phoenix, AZ

BACKGROUND

Deer Valley Unified School District is a pre-K through 12th grade school district based in Phoenix, Arizona. It's the fifth largest district in the state and serves areas of Phoenix, Glendale, Peoria, Northwest Maricopa County, Anthem, New River, and Cave Creek. The district is made up of 38 schools and employs 2,000 teachers. Dr. Gayle Galligan, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, has worked in various roles during her 31 years within the district and recently made the decision to purchase professional development (PD) collections on GVRL for the financial and educational benefit of Deer Valley Unified School District.

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

ALLOCATING FUNDS AND BEING EFFICIENT

In the past, when Galligan and her team wanted to move into PD learning communities they faced a common roadblock: cost. "As a district, all we can afford is to buy a book for all of the administrators. But then you have a spotty understanding of information, because not everyone has access to it. It's an inefficient way of building a base of knowledge," says Galligan. Teachers and administrators would all agree that it's imperative for the whole district to have access to professional development for it to be effective. Unfortunately, that's not always possible. "In a district, it's rare that you can buy a professional development resource or books for 2,000 teachers. Having GVRL gives us that opportunity," says Galligan.

It's also challenging to find a title that is one size fits all. Teachers and administrators have unique needs, interests, and questions. They're also at different experience levels. What's helpful to some teachers at the beginning of their career may be unnecessary for those with decades of experience. Galligan remarks that when teachers look for specific information, they don't need an entire book but rather a chapter or two to answer their question. Therefore, buying the same book for 2,000 teachers never seemed like a practical option.

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■ BRIDGING THE GAP FOCUSING ON SPECIFIC NEEDS

Once Galligan made the move to PD collections on GVRL, she noticed a big difference in how it could be utilized compared to print text. With Gale eBooks on GVRL, teachers can go into the content themselves—anytime, anywhere, and on any device. They have the opportunity to explore many collections from a wide variety of authors/publishers based on their particular interests. Galligan adds, “We want it to be intrinsic. If there’s more you want to learn, now you have that as an option.”

As a principal, Galligan would’ve loved to have had PD collections on GVRL. “I spent a ton of money on resources and they sat in a room outside the library and weren’t utilized in the way I hoped based on the money that was spent,” says Galligan. “Being able to use the virtual reference library has opened up avenues for professional learning that we never had. GVRL lets you hone in on specific chapters rather than having to purchase the whole book.”

Deer Valley Unified School District is a Google district and fully appreciates the tools and features integrated into the GVRL platform. “Interacting with Google Docs makes life much easier for administrators and teachers,” says Galligan. “They can download to Drive multiple times and easily drop a chapter into the Google environment.”

■ THE RESULTS A HUB FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Gale eBooks on GVRL is a game-changer for Deer Valley Unified School District. It’s become a hub for professional learning that isn’t brick and mortar. It has brought efficiency and valuable content to a wider audience. The district has also seen a large effort on grading and reporting practices since incorporating Gale eBooks on GVRL.

Recently, 150 educators in the district needed to read a book for a professional development meeting. The district didn’t have to purchase individual titles because the Solution Tree eBook was one of the many books already available to the district’s educators. Equal access to PD resources for teachers and administrators is a huge win for Deer Valley. Galligan predicts that usage will increase even more once teachers and administrators become familiar with the platform and its many advantages.