

K-12 Partnership Report

The Gowan Achievement Project

When people talk about workforce issues and K12 education, they're usually talking about preparing kids for employment opportunities after high school. But there are other ways in which the two intersect: for example, the reputation of local schools can be a significant factor for employees with children who are being asked to transfer into a new market.

This had become an issue for the Gowan Company, which provides crop protection products and services to farmers and others. While it has offices around the world, the company's headquarters are in Yuma, Arizona, where it employs more than 500 people. Gowan relies heavily on a scientific workforce, and often hires people from other parts of the country for positions at its headquarters. However, because of a perception that local schools could not adequately meet the needs of advanced students, the company has faced challenges in attracting workers with children to the area.

Jon Jessen, founder and president of this family-owned company, decided to approach the Crane School District directly so they could address this issue together. Jessen was no stranger to the local district: he had previously served on the Crane Governing Board (the local school board); Caroline, his wife, had taught at a local elementary school; and all four of his children had attended Crane Schools. Gowan and the Jessen family also have a long history of investing time and resources into Yuma's youth through college scholarships and other investments.

Jessen discussed his concerns with Cindy Baker, who is one of Gowan's presidents as well as a member of the Crane Governing Board. She initiated a conversation with Cindy Didway, Crane's superintendent, and they quickly put together a strategy and planning team that included:

- Cindy Didway, superintendent
- Lynn Thompson, assistant superintendent
- Janet Shields, curriculum director
- Mike Wicks, director of management services
- Chris Weigel, director of communications and instructional technology
- Jon Jessen, founder & owner of Gowan
- Cindy Baker—president of Exigent, LLC (a Gowan company) and Crane board member.

The project

The team started by taking a look at the facts, and realized that there may be some truth to the idea that the school district was not meeting the needs of advanced students. Like other districts around the country, Crane was responsible for bringing all children to grade level, and this priority, combined with limited resources, meant that students already performing at or above grade level

The Gowan Achievement Project

Where:

Crane School District, Yuma, Arizona

Partner(s):

Gowan Company, which offers crop protection products and services, with offices around the world and 500 employees in the Yuma area

Challenge:

Gowan Company had a difficult time recruiting employees to the area - a perception existed that schools were focused on bringing underperforming students to grade level, not meeting the needs of students at or above grade level. Gowan also wanted to ensure the preparedness of the local workforce in the future.

Solution:

The Gowan Achievement Project piloted with 90 children in grades 4, 5, and 6 who were performing at or above grade level. Children were placed in classes with master teachers, given laptops with wifi access, experienced a math- and science-intensive curriculum, and participated in special activities such as field trips that emphasize STEM careers and industries.

Partner Roles:

Gowan underwrote the pilot program, including the cost of all technology and \$10,000 grants for master teachers; it also helped design the program, participated in the hiring of the master teachers, has representatives on an advisory board, and participates in the program through classroom visits and field trips. Crane manages operation of the program.

Outcomes:

A test/control model was established to evaluate impact. GAP students outperformed their peers in math by 2:1 in Average Percent Gain Per Student, and by 8:1 in science. AIMS scores for 4th grade science show 93% proficiency for GAP students versus a statewide average of 53%.

may not have access to all the opportunities the district would like.

Working from that reality, Gowan and Crane decided to create an initiative open exclusively to students already performing at or above grade level; furthermore, given Gowan's need for a future workforce with science and math skills, and the interests of its transferring employees, the partners decided to emphasize math and science through its initiative.

Starting from this point, the partners created The Gowan Achievement Project according to the following parameters:

- **Grade levels** - GAP focused the project in the upper elementary grades (4, 5, 6); Crane is a K-8 district, and focusing on grades 4-6 allowed them to work with children who had been identified in grade 3 as performing at or above grade level through independent measures.
- **Pilot site** - The team decided to pilot the program at Rancho Viejo Elementary School, which has the highest free/reduced lunch rate (a commonly used indicator of poverty) in the district. If the pilot succeeded there, they felt confident that GAP would be successful elsewhere.
- **Instruction** - To ensure that participating students were challenged through a range of experiences, the partners decided to bring in master teachers to lead the pilot classes. The positions were posted within the district, and prospective teachers interviewed with the planning team and were asked to teach a quick lesson. The district picked up the cost of the positions, but Gowan supplied a \$10,000 stipend for each of them.
- **Technology** - The partners felt it was important to promote technological literacy, and designed GAP accordingly. Each participating student received a laptop computer; wireless access was set up in each classroom; and students had access to a variety of peripherals (digital cameras, projectors, etc.) for use in classroom projects.
- **Science/math** - Given Gowan's interests, and those of its transferring employees, the project was designed with a strong foundation in science and math. Crane selected an electronic curriculum called A+ K12 Learning Courseware, which met their requirements for networking purposes, pre-testing, curriculum variety, and ease of use. Teachers received training in the use of the curriculum.
- **Rich learning experiences** - Students participated in field trips reinforcing science and math concepts and focused on career and college preparedness. These included trips to the Arizona Science Center, Lake Powell, local state universities, and

Gowan Company headquarters. Additionally, students produced multimedia presentations and research papers on these visits and on topics related to the environment, geology, ecology, and Native American history and culture.

- **Oversight** - Individuals on the strategic planning team formed an advisory committee to review the progress of the program during quarterly meetings and to determine next steps for the program.
- **Evaluation** - To determine the impact of GAP, students participated in pre- and post-assessments in all areas of the curriculum; the district also set up a control group at another school and tracked their progress on key metrics. GAP student performance was also compared to statewide averages.

As initiator of the project and sole corporate partner, The Gowan Company took an active role in designing, funding, and overseeing the project. They also were heavily involved in discussions about the level and role

GAP Budget - Pilot Project

Salaries and Benefits

Teacher stipends (3 @\$10,000)	\$30,000
Professional development	6,000
Benefits	6,368

Class Travel

Local field trips (10/class @\$250)	\$7,500
Out of town field trips (2/class @\$2000)	12,000
Summer/extended day transportation	\$7,200

Supplies and Curriculum

Consumable Supplies (\$2,000/class)	\$6,000
Reading - Great Books/Novels	5,000
Math - Accelerated Math Program	2,000
Social Studies	10,000
Science - Equipment and Software	10,000
Assessment Program	38,000

Consulting Services

Consultant/Resident expert fees	\$20,000
---------------------------------	----------

Equipment

Laptop Computers (1/student @\$1,500)	\$140,000
Network Printers (1/class @\$1,500)	4,500
Server and Wireless Access Points	15,000
3 Portable Recharging Computer Carts	4,500
Video Projection Equip. (1/class @\$2,000)	6,000
Video Editing Software (1/class @\$150)	450
Digital Video Camera (1/class @\$850)	2,550

Total Cost, GAP Pilot Project \$333,068

that technology would play in the project; participated in interviews of prospective master teachers as part of their advisory committee role; and hosted students at their corporate headquarters on a field trip. And based on the success of the project to date, they have also been instrumental in planning for the future - including covering the costs of a rollout to other sites within the district.

Results to date

As noted previously, GAP project leaders performed pre/post evaluations with participating students, and set up a control group at a different school comprised of students academically and socioeconomically similar to those in the pilot. Outcomes from the one-year pilot include:

- GAP students outperformed their counterparts in every areas in which the electronic curriculum was utilized.
- In the area of 4th-6th grade math, GAP students outpaced the control group by two to one in the Average Percent Gain Per Student.
- In 4th-6th grade combined science scores, GAP students stretched that growth to eight times the

Average Percent Gain Per Student against the control group.

- In 4th grade science, the average for the statewide assessment (AIMS) was 53%; for GAP students, it was 93%.
- Two 5th grade GAP students each won 2nd place ribbons at the Yuma County Science Fair, the first time Rancho Viejo students have ever won ribbons at the event.
- The program has been covered by local media and internal (Gowan and Crane) reporting; this has started to increase awareness among the public and key stakeholders of the district's interest in serving the needs of children at grade level and beyond, and of Gowan's commitment to local schools.

Next steps

Based on all the results of this program to date, both Gowan and Crane have committed to continuing the program at Rancho Viejo Elementary School, which will involve an additional investment by Gowan of \$40,000 for maintenance, additional software, and field trips. In addition, the partners are expanding GAP to both middle schools in the district at an additional cost of \$300,000, which Gowan has already agreed to underwrite.

Learn how others are building effective K12 partnerships!

Get case studies, proven practices and more in the new K-12 Partnership Report

Whether you've got years of experience in K12 partnership development or you're new to the field, you need current and practical information to guide your efforts. Unfortunately that information has been hard to come by—until now.

K-12 Partnership Report was created specifically for partnership practitioners—the people who build strong, sustainable, and effective partnership-driven programs. These are people who don't have time to reinvent the wheel: they need to know what's worked in other markets and what hasn't, and this is exactly what *K12 Partnership Report* was designed to provide.

Each issue of *K-12 Partnership Report* provides subscribers with information they won't find anywhere else, helping them build more effective and efficient partnership-driven programs. Features include:

- **Case Studies** - At least two in every issue of the newsletter, highlighting successful models in other markets and showing how and why they work.
- **Proven Practices** - Articles highlighting field-tested practices, helping you run an effective program.
- **Research** - Reviews of research on various subjects to give you reliable information for decision-making.
- **Interviews** - Talks with practitioners and market experts, giving you insight on the market and on the partnership process.
- **And More** - Including industry updates, reviews of new resources, event listings, and announcements.

The information in *K-12 Partnership Report* can help you build effective and efficient partnership programs— subscribe today and see what a difference it makes!

Subscribe today with credit card, check, or purchase order by visiting
www.DeHavillandAssociates.com/KPR.html