

Success Story

Alabama School District Embraces PLAN 2020 and the Five Absolutes With Help from BYOC

Like many districts in Alabama, Conecuh County School System is working tirelessly to embrace PLAN 2020, the vision of the Alabama State Department of Education, and State Superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice's five absolutes. Conecuh was especially focused on the first two absolutes: "teach to the standards for each of the required subjects" and "through a clearly articulated and locally aligned K-12 curriculum." As Mary Ann Danford, Curriculum Coordinator for the district, began brainstorming how the district could best move forward to meet the five absolutes, she was reminded of a curriculum management system she had heard about several years ago—BuildYourOwnCurriculum (BYOC). In curiosity, Danford and the Superintendent at Conecuh County Schools looked again at BYOC, specifically how the program could help move Conecuh forward with PLAN 2020. What they found both excited and energized them—the capabilities that BYOC offered would allow them to create "living, breathing curriculum" that they could analyze for standard alignment. Ultimately, Conecuh County School District chose BYOC for three reasons: the teacher-friendly interface, the way it seamlessly aligns with PLAN 2020, and the competitive price.

Collaboration is the Key to Building Curriculum

In the past, Danford had developed curriculum mostly on her own, using her own combination— a pacing guide format along with curriculum map features. She liked the depth of a curriculum map, but the usefulness of a pacing

guide. When she stumbled upon BYOC, Danford was thrilled that she had finally found a system that mirrored her own innovative and intuitive thinking. BYOC offered Danford the combination of analytical and practical that she was looking for in a curriculum management system. BYOC is now giving Danford and the teachers the ability to collaborate on curriculum allowing for "real teacher input." **The ability to collaborate also gave teachers more ownership over what they were being asked to teach in their classrooms.**

Now that Conecuh County Schools is using BYOC, they have a plan in place to ensure they use the program to its fullest extent as quickly as possible. With already solid curriculum maps for Mathematics and English Language Arts created, these courses will be the first uploaded into BYOC, for grades 6-12, by the end of August 2014. At the same time, the Social Studies teachers will document courses for grades 6-12 based on the 2010 Social Studies Alabama Course of Study and the Common Core Literacy and Writing Standards. By the end of the 2014-2015 school year, Conecuh plans to have all English Language Arts, Math, and Social Studies curriculum in BYOC to analyze it for standard alignment. Then, during the summer of 2015, teachers will build the Science curriculum based on the Next Generation Standards and Common Core Literacy and Writing Standards. Beyond the core subjects, the district's goal is to document all courses, including electives and Career Tech courses, by the end of summer 2016. As curriculum is being added, the staff



Conecuh County School System

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will rebuild and improve on the solid work the district has already done. Danford is also excited to use the reports and analysis capabilities of BYOC to achieve the PLAN 2020 absolutes.

Easy Standards Gap Analysis

Although the staff at Conecuh loves the easy-to-use interface of BYOC and the intuitive design behind the software, what really sold them was its ability to analyze curriculum for standard alignment. According to Danford, “we want to eventually load all of our curriculum maps, K-12, into the program and analyze each course for gaps in the standards (over teaching/under teaching).” Through a variety of reports, BYOC is able to look at what standards a district is covering, what standards a district is not covering, and how balanced the coverage is for a particular standard, both horizontally and vertically. With these capabilities **BYOC is the perfect tool for schools looking to achieve absolute number one, “teach to the standards for each of the required subjects” and absolute number two, “through a clearly articulated and locally aligned K-12 curriculum.”** Once Conecuh has their full K-12 curriculum in BYOC, they will instantly be able to see where they are succeeding on these two absolutes and where they should place their efforts to improve. Not only is this great for the Conecuh administration to show that they are following PLAN 2020, it also benefits the students, who with better aligned curriculum will be more “college and career ready” for life after high school.

Higher Quality Curriculum

In addition to helping Conecuh align to standards, BYOC will also help them create more buy-in to curriculum planning from their staff. The system will be introduced to the majority of their staff throughout the summer, but they are already confident in BYOC’s ability to increase teacher commitment to writing curriculum. According to Danford, “Summer 2013, I started my first curriculum project with teacher’s authoring the curriculum. There was instant teacher buy-in. Towards the end of 2013-2014, teachers

started asking what they are we going to get to work on this summer.” **BYOC allows teachers the opportunity to have their voice heard when it comes to curriculum creation.** BYOC was created by teachers for teachers, therefore, it is designed to be accessible and useful to teachers and their daily life in the ever-hectic classroom.

Another feature of BYOC that the Conecuh staff is excited to use is the ability to view and share curriculum across districts. The logic behind this decision was simple for Danford, as “two heads are better than one.” Danford explained, by sharing our “curriculum content, we hope to validate our curriculum decision based upon what other systems have done.” Not only will BYOC allow the district to improve curriculum alignment to standards and create teacher engagement with the curriculum, it will also give them the ability to capitalize on all of the great curricular work already being done and give support to their own curricular decisions. Danford continued, “**By being able to look at other districts, it can spur us on to think about things we haven’t yet thought about.** It offers us a different view point.” It also helps ensure their curriculum is capable of leaving graduates “college and career ready.”

Achieving PLAN 2020

Educators always strive to make decisions for their districts and school systems that will profoundly impact the learning experience they are able to offer to their students. This was the goal behind the Alabama State Department of Education’s PLAN 2020 and it is the goal behind Conecuh County School’s decision to purchase and jump into BYOC with an intense drive and focus. **Conecuh County Schools, along with the help of BYOC, is following in the footsteps of Alabama’s commitment to transform children into “college and career ready” graduates.** BYOC is a tool that will help the Conecuh staff achieve the PLAN 2020 absolutes, create more teacher engagement and collaboration with the curriculum, and create a wider learning community by sharing curriculum with other schools.