

# Behind the Scenes at Lee County Schools: How Curriculum & IT Collaborated to Give Their Teachers and Students Resources to Succeed



In the School District of Lee County, FL, the Curriculum and IT departments have worked together to build an effective digital learning ecosystem. With a foundation built on IMS Global interoperability standards, the ecosystem utilizes the SAFARI Montage® Learning Object Repository™ (LOR) to provide teachers with easy access to academic standards-aligned digital resources and tools designed to support their instructional needs and provide personalized learning experiences for students.

## Lee County Schools’ Digital Instruction Challenges



Students and Teacher Had Too Many Logins



Random Web Browsing for Digital Resources



Low Usage of Procured Applications & Resources

While assessing their instructional materials, the Curriculum Department felt they needed a way to get more value from their learning resources while also simplifying the work for teachers. *“We found that the district was investing a lot in digital instructional materials, and our ROI wasn’t good because usage was low. Every year, teachers would get access to a variety of online curriculum tools but they were not using these resources and neither were students,”* said Rob Stratton, Coordinator for Instructional Materials, Media and Instructional Technology, Curriculum Services, Lee County Schools, FL. Instead, teachers were continuing to struggle to find the right materials on their own, spending hours searching YouTube and the web for resources that were not easily accessible to students.

## Solution Step 1: Establish a Standards-Based Learning Object Repository

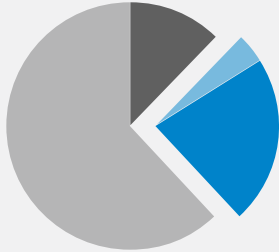
Curriculum wanted to provide teachers with better access to and a greater choice of learning resources via a mechanism that was also capable of delivering the content to students. For IT, delivering on this request meant finding a reliable and secure way to streamline access to all of the district’s digital resources. Curriculum and IT came together to review their options and chose the SAFARI Montage Learning Object Repository.

As an IMS LTI®, Common Cartridge® and OneRoster® certified platform, the LOR enables the district to provide easy Single Sign-On access to various online curriculum tools via LTI and other APIs. It allows the district to upload and manage their own created resources; access licensed content available from SAFARI Montage by premier video broadcasters and publishers, such as National Geographic, Scholastic, PBS, Disney Education, History, Biography and BBC; and import digital courseware from Pearson, HMH and McGraw Hill via Thin Common Cartridge®. The LOR also provides LCS teachers with federated search access to curated and standards-aligned free and open educational resources (OERs) available through SAFARI Montage.

The SAFARI Montage LOR had a lot more to offer the district than easy access. As Rob Stratton noted, *“Establishing a library of digital learning objects with greater functionality such as the ability to create playlists and correlate objects to academic standards helps teachers provide personalized choices to students and gives more value to the content by developing SMART (Shared, Managed, Adaptive, Rigorous and Tagged) learning objects.”*

The combination of high-quality procured, created and free curated resources available via one federated search has made the LOR an invaluable tool for teaching and learning in Lee County Schools. All of these resources can be added to playlists and linked to Google Classroom™.

26% of teachers are spending 4 to over 10 hours each week searching online for lesson materials<sup>1</sup>



- 0–4 hours/week
- 4–10 hours/week
- 10+ hours/week
- Don’t know

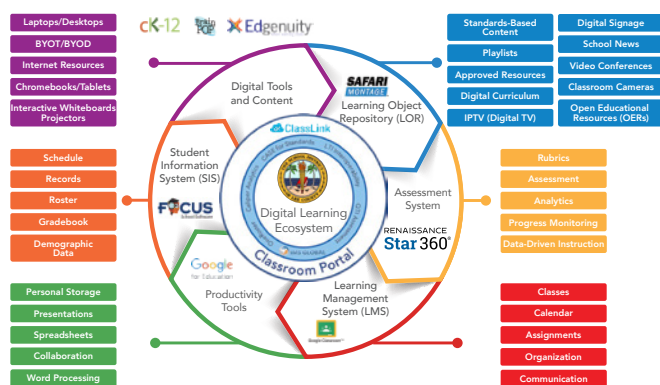
<sup>1</sup>The Learning Counsel. (2017). Digital Curriculum Transformation Survey. Retrieved from <http://www.thelearningcounsel.com>.

## Solution Step 2: Build an Interoperable Digital Ecosystem

Beyond just providing easy access to resources, the team committed to building a digital ecosystem using IMS Global interoperability standards which would allow them to integrate the LOR with other digital tools and platforms. After evaluating their current resources, they knew that they would first need a commitment from all of their content and tool providers to adopt the standards.

According to Dwayne Alton, Executive Director, Infrastructure Services, Lee County Schools, "At the beginning of the project, we invited all of our vendors for a face-to-face meeting at the district, showed them the district's long list of curriculum resource URLs and logins and asked them why they hated our teachers. That got their attention." All of these partners were informed that in order to do business with Lee County Schools going forward, they were going to have to comply with these standards.

To date, the team has succeeded in working with their external partners to create an integrated environment where teachers and students can easily leverage LOR content and tools to create engaging and personalized learning opportunities for their students. The district has worked with CompassLearning® (now Edgenuity Inc.) to integrate interactive curriculum, activities and assessments within the LOR, and teachers are able to integrate all of these resources into Google Classroom to create engaging digital lessons and paths for personalized learning.



## Lee County Schools' Digital Instruction Solutions



SAFARI Montage Learning Object Repository for One Place to Find Content



IMS Global Interoperability Standards for Single Sign-On & Data Import



Collaborative Team Work by Curriculum & IT

## Results/Impact

At Lee County Schools, the LOR is a dynamic and ever-expanding library of comprehensive learning resources that Curriculum is continually curating and developing to make sure teachers and students have access to the highest-quality current materials available. Rather than searching the internet for content, users are now able to engage in what they do best – teaching and learning. For Rachelle Resendes, 5th Grade Teacher at Lee County Schools, there has been a noticeable improvement in reading levels and Renaissance Star Assessments® test results of her students. "Having access to digital resources has revolutionized my classroom. I have seen such a positive impact...My students are currently on a reading level anywhere between 5th grade and 12th grade, and the results of their latest Star assessments showed approximately 2 years growth in Reading and 5.6 years in Math," said Resendes.

For Curriculum, the reviews are in and the feedback and results are positive. "Access to digital content in SAFARI Montage has simplified the work of our teachers and greatly improved students' engagement and learning," added Rob Stratton. "The ingestion of content into SAFARI Montage (Learning Object Repository) from multiple publishers, not only provides teachers and students with greater content choice, but also provides analytical data demonstrating the impact and effectiveness the content has on student performance."

For IT, the standards-based digital ecosystem is flexible and ready to adapt and grow with the district's technology needs and choices. Even the smallest IT departments can manage application interoperability when the ecosystem is standards-based.

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