

Wyoming

Providing Equitable Access Statewide With Canvas



- Wyoming K-20
- 100k+ Students
- Statewide adoption in 2017

SUMMARY

Wyoming's official state motto is "Equal Rights," and is nicknamed The Equality State. With this value of educational equality in mind, the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) lobbied to implement a common LMS statewide to significantly increase college and career readiness among Wyoming students. Read on to see how Wyoming rolled out a statewide LMS strategy that supports teachers and positively impacts educators and students from early childhood through professional development.

THE CHALLENGE

In alignment with state values, the WDE has a mandate to create a plan around digital learning and equity. Starting in 2016, the team made a statewide effort to understand what districts needed to drive digital learning forward. This vision would end up being instrumental in the state's pivot to distance learning during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The search for Canvas LMS began to provide a consistent, familiar, digital classroom and ease the burden on both students and teachers. During their investigation into district needs, the team found that part of the reason courses weren't being shared at the state level was because they didn't have a common LMS. Without one, smaller districts were forced to pay high costs per student to ensure every student could have equitable access to high-quality content and digital learning tools. Because of the state's rural nature, an LMS may be desired but not economically viable for all districts. With the state's support behind a common LMS, these issues would be resolved.

The University of Wyoming was an early adopter of Canvas LMS and saw high rates of student achievement, making Canvas LMS the obvious choice for the WDE in its search.



Wyoming's Advice for Other States

01

Having a common LMS is cost-effective for smaller K12 districts and allows students to take ownership of their learning in higher education, regardless of where and when they are learning.

02

The dialogue and collaboration between all districts is invaluable—bringing together both technology and education leaders.

03

Bring on a Canvas adoption consultant! This person is the go-to expert for providing implementation and adoption across the state—one district and institution at a time.

04

The statewide vantage point allows for strategic visioning for education decisions to further support districts and institutions alike.

THE SOLUTION

The Enrolled Act 57 was passed during the 2017 legislative session requiring the WDE to provide districts with a learning management system (LMS). The WDE, in collaboration with the University of Wyoming and five community colleges, selected Canvas as the single LMS to create a unified K-20 experience for students and teachers across the state. Utilizing this statewide system allows students and teachers to take advantage of many benefits, including consistent support of online and in-class instructional practices, and additional educational opportunities that equip students for success at all levels and prepare them for future educational endeavors.

“A common LMS allowed our students to focus less on learning the tool and more on their education from elementary to high school to college and beyond.”

—Laurel Ballard

State Director of Digital Learning and Innovation, Student & Teacher Resource Team at the Wyoming Department of Education

Canvas fueled teacher collaboration too, providing new opportunities for teachers to share common courses and instructional resources without having to reinvent the wheel.

Eliminating the need for students to learn several disparate systems allows students to focus more on learning and less on technology. With a common LMS from kindergarten to college, every student now has equitable access to a high-quality education. Whether students move districts, take dual-enrollment courses, or enroll in skills-based courses at the college level, the learning platform looks the same.

This common LMS strategy required strong programmatic support from the WDE and higher education leadership. “Most teachers don’t learn how to teach online, so we’ve put a lot of effort into our change management initiatives to facilitate and strengthen adoption,” said Robin Grandpre, WDE Project and Performance Manager. In addition to Wyoming support, Instructure’s Wyoming Principal Learning Consultant, David Stokowski is integral to each Canvas implementation’s success.

THE RESULTS

Canvas LMS is preparing Wyoming to provide a seamless transition from K-12, to college, to the workforce.

At the University of Wyoming, Canvas Catalog is also used to provide courses to future college students, employees seeking enrichment, professionals seeking deeper subject knowledge, and any other eager learners. With these open course offerings to the community, the use of Canvas LMS is truly impacting Wyoming citizens from early childhood through career development because of the synchronous vision of Wyoming educational leadership.

The implementation of Canvas as the statewide LMS was greeted with optimism by leadership across grade levels. Transitions to Canvas LMS were successful because of state leadership and a successful partnership with Instructure. “We had a lot of our supports already there, we had extra training days with representatives from Instructure that could step in immediately to help our teachers, and that made all the difference in our successful rollout,” Robin Grandpre said.

More than 100,000 students in Wyoming use Canvas as their learning platform, causing not only a shift in how students learn, but also how teachers teach. “We can start having discussions about how to effectively teach online that aren’t just about how to use Canvas. It has allowed us to shift our pedagogy,” Laurel Ballard said.