

# Oconee County Schools

## Overview:

The Oconee County Schools needed a modern Learning Management System (LMS) that would:

- Help it manage a robust and expanding library of digital content
- Support the district's 1:1 device implementation
- Integrate with its existing programs and software

## Customer:

Oconee County Schools, Watkinsville, GA.



# 2016

Year Implemented itslearning

## District Profile:



# 11 Schools

1 Primary, 6 Elementary, 2 Middle, 2 High



# 8,018 Students

## Demographics:

21% Gifted



13% Special Needs



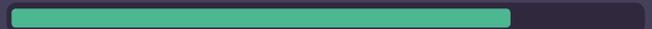
3% ESOL



32% Native Languages



79% White



6% Asian/Pacific Islander



6% Hispanic



5% Black



## A Strong Commitment to Digital Transformation

*How the itslearning Learning Management System supports this large school district's ongoing pledge to digital learning transformation.*

When Oconee County Schools (OCS) in Watkinsville, Ga., decided to roll out a 1:1 program across all of its schools, it also needed a new way to manage its digital content. After managing for some time without any budget for curriculum adoption, the 8,000-student district began exploring different learning management systems (LMSs) that would support its 1:1 initiative while also providing a centralized repository for all educational materials.

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Mike Hale, Director of Technology, Oconee County Schools

## Narrowing Down its Options

That changed in 2016, when OCS decided to pilot a new LMS with 80 teachers in its ELA department. Hales says the district looked at eight different LMSs, narrowed that list down to three, and then did a “deep dive” into each platform’s features. All were similar, he says, but each brought a particular strength to the table.

Hale says the itslearning library stood out during the software review process. An education-focused learning object repository, the library is based on regional, national, and international standards and enables the finding, sharing, and reusing of content from teachers and educational publishers.

“We needed good quality, standardized content that teachers could select, so the library became one of our ‘must haves,’” says Hale. The district was also drawn to the way itslearning seamlessly integrates with other systems, including its gradebook, Safari Montage, and other digital content.

After a successful pilot, the district rolled out its new LMS system-wide across all K-12 schools in 2018. Headed up by Hale, Chief Academic Officer Claire Buck, and OCS’ teaching and learning staff, the initiative supports a 1:1 program that by the Fall of 2019 will include all but the kindergarten and first grade (both of which will have classroom sets of 12 devices for a 2:1 student-to-device ratio).

## The Device-to-Content Ratio Rises

As the number of OCS students using 1:1 devices grows, the amount of content its teachers and instructional coordinators uses increases exponentially. “It’s growing month-over-month, as part of our process to a digital conversion,” says Hale. The district has also been doing a lot of professional development to support the initiative and relies on itslearning for at least part of that teacher education process.

For example, Hale’s department created screen captures, how-tos, and other tutorial-type resources that teachers

access in the LMS. “With so many new devices in their classrooms, teachers need everything from basic skills to new classroom management strategies,” says Hale. They also need help monitoring student activity in the classroom—something that’s enabled by their LMS’ Chromebook add-on.

“That’s just one more part of the one-stop-shop that itslearning provides,” Hale points out, adding that instructors can access their Google logins from their Chromebooks and then automatically log into the LMS. “From there, they get right into their shared content, resources, and lesson plans.”

Hale says the Google integration is also beneficial for younger students. For grades K-2, for example, students use badges to login individually and access their classroom content. “We keep looking for ways to make that process even more efficient for our very young learners,” he adds.

## Assessing Your Needs

To districts that want to implement LMSs, Hale says the best first step is to define why you want the system in the first place. This seemingly-simple piece of information will help you find a vendor that will partner with you and make sure you achieve that goal (plus more). “There are quite a few good LMSs out there—hundreds in fact,” says Hale. “The trick is to find the one that has specific strengths that align with exactly what you’re looking for – and that’s what we found with itslearning.”

Hale also cautions districts not to rush the 1:1 or LMS adoption processes, both of which take longer than simply adopting a new textbook. Finally, he tells schools to consider building course templates. That way, when a new hire comes in, or when someone gets assigned to new content, there’s no need to build the content from scratch.

“The teacher can just copy the template and then tweak it as needed. This still gives instructors autonomy in terms running their classrooms, but it provides a tremendous resource to already have content organized and arranged in templates,” says Hale. “We did a lot of that this year, and we think it’s going to make for an even easier start of the 2019-20 school year.”

