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myeLearning.org of Nebraska Implements Statewide K-12 ANGEL Adoption

INTRODUCTION

The State of Nebraska's Educational Service Units (ESU's) are extensions of the Nebraska Department of Education. Each unit serves a different region, but they also work cooperatively to benefit K-12 education statewide.

In 2000, ESU administrators challenged the ESU's to develop a plan that would position Nebraska on the leading edge of 21st century teaching and learning practice.

Today Nebraska's ESU's are actively creating a culture that fosters the development of independent, lifelong learners and at the same time making professional development opportunities easily accessible to teachers across the state. They're doing both with great success using the internet and the ANGEL Learning Management System (LMS).

NEBRASKA'S K-12 ELEARNING HUB

When Nebraska's Education Service Unit administrators challenged the state's ESU's to position Nebraska on the leading edge of 21st century teaching and learning practice, the outcome was a plan that takes advantage of the internet's anytime, any place accessibility to help teachers, students, and school districts attain their educational goals.

One focus of the plan was K-12 staff development. Making staff development available via the internet would eliminate programming redundancy, allow staff development to take place 24/7/365 independent of location, and enable efficient sharing of expertise.

Student learning was an equally important plan focus. Course content offered via the internet would supplement face-to-face learning and allow students to study course content at their optimal learning times. Offering complete online courses would also allow students to determine their own pace of learning and open additional learning opportunities that may not fit into the normal school day.

To implement web-based instruction, ESU administrators formed a membership-optional consortium. What began in 2000 as a challenge to take Nebraska to the forefront of teaching and learning practice has today become "myeLearning.org of Nebraska," Nebraska's K-12 eLearning hub. ESU districts statewide are now opting to join myeLearning.org, so the students and teachers they serve can become part of this quickly growing success story.

ANGEL|LMS CENTERPIECE OF NEBRASKA'S K-12 ELEARNING HUB

The centerpiece of Nebraska's eLearning hub is ANGEL|LMS. myeLearning.org adopted ANGEL to manage and deliver programming using the internet after reviewing and evaluating popular course management systems. Much more than a course container, ANGEL is a learning management system. It provides a comprehensive suite of adaptable teaching and learning components to not only efficiently manage instruction, but to also easily create the enhanced, collaborative learning experiences today's demanding educational climate requires.

Douglas Zauha, Director of K-12 eLearning for myeLearning.org of Nebraska, identifies four major reasons myeLearning.org chose ANGEL.

- Easy-to-use – Users have varying levels of comfort with technology. To help ensure a successful implementation the system had to be easy-to-use.
- Flexible and extensible – The LMS had to be flexible to "bend" to demands placed on it by different user groups. It had to "expand" to be able to tie together district systems. ANGEL's flexibility allows "myeLearning.org to tie a school's student management systems and other potential systems together in one place," says Zauha.
- Lowest total cost of ownership – "ANGEL was the most cost effective solution we evaluated," Zauha reports.
- Support— Adopting a system for statewide, K-12 implementation at this early stage requires commitment to success on the parts of both the educators who are choosing the technology and the vendor who will be supporting it. Zauha relates

that, “in conversations with the ANGEL Learning sales and support teams the high level of support ANGEL Learning provides and their dedication to successful implementation quickly became apparent.”

HOW ANGEL AND MYEARNING.ORG WORK FOR TEACHERS

To the surprise of myeLearning.org organizers, teachers have more quickly adopted ANGEL to supplement their classes than to pursue online professional development.

ANGEL IS VIRTUAL LOCKER FOR TEACHERS

According to Zauha, one reason teachers get value from ANGEL is “that it is a place where they can tie all the elements of their classes together. ANGEL is a virtual locker,” Zauha continues, “one area where teachers and students can keep all their materials together helping them become more efficient and better organized and as a result making their jobs easier.” And, once teachers have courses in ANGEL they can easily modify and reuse the courses in consecutive years.

HELPING TEACHERS COMPLY WITH STATE INITIATIVES

In addition, ANGEL capabilities make it easier for teachers to comply with at least one State of Nebraska initiative. The state requires teaching through “quality indicators.” As one aspect of this initiative teachers conduct an item-by-item analysis of assessments they write to determine if, based on student responses, they developed a good assessment. ANGEL wizards can analyze assessment results automatically and generate a report that

identifies how frequently each question was missed and the number of times each answer was chosen. Not only does this capability help a teacher determine the quality of an assessment without time-consuming hand tallying, it also helps teachers identify weaknesses in student skill sets, target instruction, and according to Zauha, “helps teachers become better teachers.” An outcome of using ANGEL that myeLearning.org did not anticipate.

ANGEL USE PROMOTES AREA PARTNERSHIPS

Another outcome of using ANGEL that myeLearning.org did not originally anticipate and an indicator of teachers’ strong, positive attitudes toward using ANGEL was teachers’ desire to pursue online professional development in instructional design of online courses. To ensure classes supplemented with online content and totally online courses are of the highest quality, myeLearning.org is teaming with area postsecondary institutions to offer online professional development courses that teach instructional design for online courses. Teachers receive a certificate of completion in instructional design in online course development when finished. myeLearning.org considers the facts that teachers requested professional development and the partnerships formed as a result to both be very positive outcomes of their ANGEL adoption.

A primary, not as yet articulated, reason teachers adopt ANGEL is the positive impact using ANGEL has on student learning. ANGEL causes students to take responsibility for their learning and helps create independent learners.

HOW THE MYEARNING.ORG ANGEL ADOPTION WORKS FOR STUDENTS

"There is more to learning than taking a class," Zauha points out, "the 24/7 access to course material via ANGEL helps students manage their learning." When students are given the tools to manage their learning, "we create independent, lifelong learners," Zauha contends. And, "because materials are available across the state and wherever the student happens to be," Zauha continues, "we are beginning to create global learning communities where students can learn, communicate, and share regardless of time and place during their optimal learning times."

LEARNING EXTENDS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Before class content became available 24/7 with ANGEL students could only access class content when they were in the school building. With ANGEL, all student material is in a central location and can be accessed anytime from any computer with an internet connection. Course calendars, syllabi, announcements, and content are all easily accessible. Students can review materials, complete assignments, and submit work electronically. They can take part in group activities virtually in ANGEL and extend their learning beyond the confines of the traditional classroom.

STUDENTS ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR LEARNING SUCCESS

The ANGEL Learner Profile allows students to assume responsibility for their learning success. Students can see their scores on assignments, quizzes, and tests compared

with their classmates' scores with the touch of a finger. This statistical analysis helps students become better students.

LEARNING CONTINUES WITH ANGEL

ANGEL's any place, anytime access also serves students well during Nebraska's long winters. In rural areas, students often have trouble simply getting to school. It is also sometimes necessary for a student to be absent for an extended period. In these cases and others that would previously have interrupted learning, ANGEL allows learning to continue and enables ongoing interaction and collaboration.

RESULTS-TO-DATE: IMPRESSIVE AND GROWING

ESU districts are becoming part of myeLearning.org at "a significant rate," Zauha relates. In September 2004 when myeLearning.org began Nebraska's statewide ANGEL implementation only a handful of schools were implementing e-learning. Just seven months later, sixty-six Nebraska school districts and ESU's have opted to utilize the system, and the adoption rate continues to grow.

Zauha identifies the consortium's selection of ANGEL to deliver myeLearning.org of Nebraska programming as a major contributor to the program's success "ANGEL's ease-of-use has made it easy for faculty and students to jump right in, and ANGEL capabilities support many and varied uses. The more we use ANGEL the more applications we discover."

The rousing success of the myeLearning.org of Nebraska ANGEL adoption in these first few months is a clear indicator that both teachers and students are ready for the program and value its positive impact on traditional educational methods. "We are pleased with program results to date," Zauha says, "and expect success to continue to grow as word of the positive impact of ANGEL adoption spreads across the state."

ANGEL TECHNICAL FEATURES

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

- Import existing and publisher-created lessons
- Easily create and publish new lessons directly to the web
- Share lessons within school, across a district

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

- Class plan, calendar, announcements, homework assignments and more online and accessible, with appropriate login information, from any computer with an internet connection anytime
- Course email simplifies communication among and between school, teachers, students, and parents
- Discussion forums, journals, groups, and blogs engage students, enrich learning

ASSESSMENT

- Automatic grading
- Use all question types
- Automatic student feedback if you choose

USER-DRIVEN DESIGN

- Easy-to-use design makes even beginning users quickly comfortable
- Navigation keeps learners from wandering off
- Power mode for advanced users
- Flexible architecture adapts to school-specific needs
- A accessible to meet the needs of diverse learners

TECHNICAL CONFIGURATION

- School or ANGEL Learning hosted
- Microsoft Windows 2000 or 2003 Server
- Microsoft SQL Server

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

- Open architecture
- SCORM compliant
- Integrates with enterprise systems

ABOUT ANGEL LEARNING, INC.

ANGEL Learning develops and markets the ANGEL Learning Management System (LMS). ANGEL|LMS is the enterprise learning management system that combines an open, flexible architecture with a complete set of easy-to-use features. This proven, powerful system allows instructors to efficiently manage instruction, communicate quickly, easily, and effectively, and develop the sophisticated learning experiences today's demanding educational climate requires.

ANGEL Learning evolved from research and teaching experience at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. Today, though ANGEL Learning has grown from a campus-based organization to a profitable firm with global reach, the company stays loyal to its academic roots.

ANGEL customers include two of the largest universities in the United States, Penn State University and Michigan State University, large community college systems, small and large public and private postsecondary institutions, K-12 school systems, and businesses across the country. Visit the ANGEL Learning website at www.angellearning.com.