**SITUATION**

Spring Branch Independent School District, located just outside of Houston, Texas, is faced with the same budget cuts as most districts across the country, making it difficult to provide quality resources and up-to-date textbooks for its students. As a way to save and leverage money in the district budget, JoAnn Conlon, the Director of Innovative Resource Media Systems, has initiated a program to replace textbooks with digital resources.

**CHALLENGE 1: FROM PRINT TO DIGITAL RESOURCES**

To implement the change from print to digital resources, Conlon first needed to demonstrate to her colleagues and district leaders that digital offered more value to students and teachers.

**SOLUTION 1: ABC-CLIO SOLUTIONS HAS ADVANTAGES OVER TEXTBOOKS**

With her years of working and teaching with ABC-CLIO, she found them to be “a revelation” because they were perfectly positioned to replace print textbooks. Furthermore, they feature many advantages over textbooks: not only are they less expensive, but are also constantly updated; and they offer enhanced student engagement through exploration of video, audio, and visual, and multimedia content.

To ensure that teachers and administration would embrace and utilize the new collection of digital resources, she spoke with major constituents such as associate superintendent, executive directors, interdisciplinary coaches, librarians and others who would help influence behavior change. SBISD has the foresight to include the district librarian in textbook meetings, so Conlon was able to present her ideas there. She showcased the ease of navigation, how the content is aligned to SBISD’s standards, and how teachers can develop lesson plans based on standards as well as skill. She explained that these are excellent as supplemental resources as well as affordable textbook replacements. Furthermore, they would give students important tools for building research and critical thinking skills.

Jim Leifer, the instructional lead for secondary social studies, immediately began to develop a program to replace social studies textbooks. Dr. Jennifer Blaine, the associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction, was so strongly convinced she requested Jim Leifer and JoAnn Conlon work together on effectively integrating databases into the entire district.

**“ABC-CLIO solutions really engage the students with what’s available. They’re not limited to static content that can only fit into 200 pages.”**

**DISTRICT LEADER**

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**CHALLENGE 2**

To continue the successful integration of ABC-CLIO’s online databases, increased awareness was required throughout the district and in other curriculum areas beyond social studies. Conlon noted that behavioral change of students and teachers is the key issue and it would be important to develop a program to reinforce the expectation that the databases would be used by students and staff.
**SOLUTION 2**

Conlon, Liefer, and Blaine spread enthusiasm through the district and beyond the social studies curriculum. Conlon reviewed the databases and showed how they would meet the needs of the students. She emphasized that existing lesson plans need not be rewritten – only the content delivery method changes. An expert trainer was available to assist teachers on the system for three months. ABC-CLIO Solutions became resources for the program of online devices provided for student collaborative work. Most notably, the English Language Arts also adopted the databases into their curriculum.

**ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING AND ANALYSIS: WEB LITERACY**

Conlon doesn’t use the terms “21st-century skills,” “information literacy,” or “library,” but instead discusses Web Literacy and the Learning Commons. She emphasizes that educators need to “speak their language” for effective communication between students and educators as well as among educators themselves. She has leveraged the Learning Commons concept to create a district-wide blended learning model with ABC-CLIO databases as the core resource for social studies.

**EVALUATING SUCCESS**

Conlon was surprised at how quickly database use increased after “marketing” the ABC-CLIO databases within the district. By the end of the semester, the databases had 35,000 users.

The databases had been in the district for a while, but she found that she needed to increase awareness of the resources the Library Learning Commons provided “to make sure you stay out in front.”

**THE FUTURE**

Conlon notes that with budget cuts, textbook adoption will continue to be a controversial issue in the next several years. Districts are striving to replace or extend the life of textbooks, which comprise a large part of school district budgets. She feels there are better ways to leverage that money. This year, her district is concentrating on increasing the number of devices available to students and teachers. The district has a five-year strategy and the Learning Commons are part of that strategy and vision.