

Hawaiian Middle School Leverages Streaming Media for Personalized Instruction and Highly Productive, Self-Directed Learning

Teaching the YouTube Generation

CHALLENGE

Middle school librarian was struggling to motivate and teach ELL learners at all levels and empower teachers with materials for personalized instruction to the YouTube generation.

SOLUTION

Utilizing the *Learn360* streaming media platform, this librarian was empowered with highly engaging, cross-curricular video and multimedia content for all learning levels, which motivated students to actively participate in self-guided learning.



School: Central Middle School

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii

District: Hawaii Department of Education

Librarian: Holly Gates

With a high poverty rate and a large percentage of students who are English language learners, Central Middle School in Honolulu, Hawaii, faces many challenges in helping students excel.

Located in the heart of the city, the school is one of only a handful in the state in which all students receive subsidized breakfast and lunch. More than a third of its students come from Micronesia, and many of these are first-generation Americans whose families don't speak English at home.

Although reading in English is difficult for many of these students, they're very much like their peers who grew up in the U.S. in at least one respect: They love watching videos on YouTube.

Central Middle School Librarian Holly Gates has found a way to leverage this interest and channel it into highly productive, self-directed learning with *Learn360*, a streaming media service for K-12 schools from Infobase that engages students with more than 164,000 carefully vetted instructional videos and other resources.

A tool to personalize instruction

Learn360 is a fully self-contained, ad-free collection of video clips, interactive and printable materials, audio files, maps, and other multimedia resources. All of the materials have been methodically curated from high-quality sources—such as BBC Learning, History Education, and National

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Holly Gates, Central Middle School Librarian

Geographic—and correlated with state and national learning standards.

Users can browse the entire site by grade level (all grades, elementary, or middle/high). There are no links to outside sources, so students of all ages can safely browse the collection to find the information they need. The service works on tablets and smartphones as well, so students can stream the content to any digital device whether they’re at school or home.

A key feature of *Learn360* is the platform’s seamless integration with Google Classroom and learning management systems such as Schoology, itslearning, Canvas, Moodle, and Brightspace/D2L, which makes it easy to teach with the materials and also personalize instruction for every student.



Teachers, librarians, and others can create playlists of recommended materials and share them with individuals or groups. For instance, librarians can create playlists of videos that can help teach important curricular themes and share these with specific grade level or subject-area teachers. Teachers can embed videos into their lessons, or assign specific resources to individual students to help fill gaps in their understanding.

What’s more, teachers can add personalized video introductions to the playlists they create for students, pointing out specific things that students should look for in the videos or providing other prompts. In a recent enhancement, teachers can further customize by adding their own YouTube videos to share with students.

Bringing abstract concepts to life

Gates had used *Learn360* at her previous school. When she arrived at Central Middle School in 2016, she was thrilled to see that her new school subscribed to the service as well. Although resources at Central are tight, *Learn360* is one resource she won’t give up.

Experiencing concepts in multi-media format helps bring them to life for students.



“Hearing Martin Luther King give his *I Have a Dream* speech in his own voice, they are mesmerized,” Gates says.

“We’re not a wealthy school, and we have to trim the fat off our budget,” she says. “*Learn360* was the one thing I made sure to keep.”

Why does Gates consider *Learn360* indispensable? It’s a dynamic teaching and learning resource, she says—one that is particularly apt for reaching and engaging today’s students.

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Experiencing concepts in multimedia format helps bring them to life for students. “Hearing Martin Luther King give his *I Have a Dream* speech in his own voice, they are mesmerized,” Gates says. “You don’t get that from just reading the speech.” Watching videos also helps students who are learning to read, write, and speak in English associate images or concepts with certain English words or phrases.

Since arriving at Central Middle School, Gates has championed the use of *Learn360* among faculty. **When she has teachers in the library, she shows them how to use the resource in their classrooms and encourages them to try it out. She has also hosted online webinars to help build awareness among teachers.**

Her efforts are paying off, as more teachers at Central are using *Learn360* to “flip” their classrooms, personalize instruction, or even just engage students in learning.

Powering self-directed learning

While teachers are using the playlist feature of *Learn360* to help personalize instruction, Gates has found a unique way to use the service to advance learning in her independent study and library elective classes.

“I use *Learn360* as an incentive to motivate students,” she explains. “I tell them it’s like ‘legal YouTube’: When they finish their work, they can go on *Learn360* and watch anything they want.”

When students are free to explore any topic they choose, they become invested in their learning. This type of self-directed learning is a powerful motivator.

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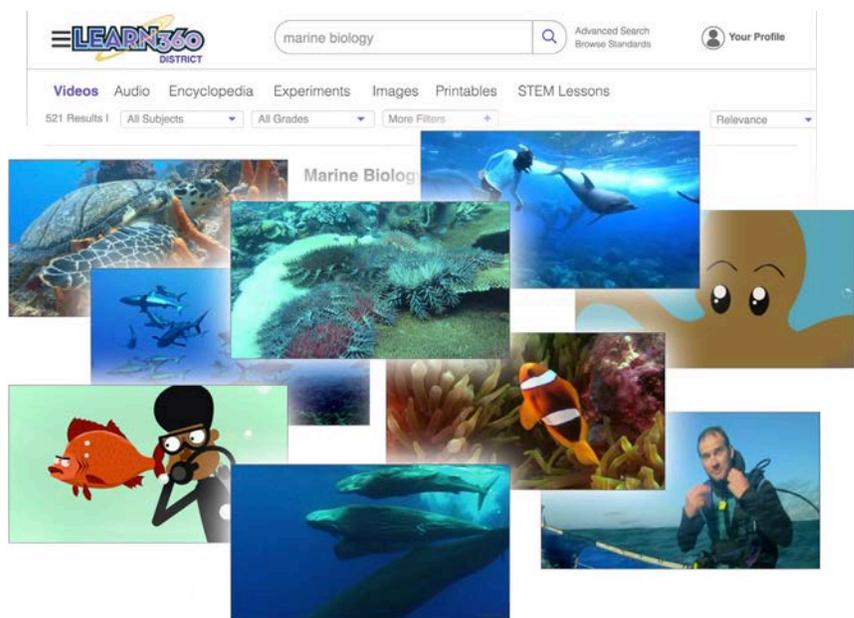


According to the 2019 Speak Up Survey from the nonprofit organization Project Tomorrow, 49% of students in grades 6–12 say they use YouTube for self-directed learning at home.

Speak Up Survey: Speak Up Research Initiative, 2018–19 Findings

One Central student whom Gates describes as “high-energy” had trouble focusing and sitting still in class, which was disruptive to others. School leaders changed his schedule so that he had an independent study in the library with Gates.

“I sat him in front of *Learn360* and told him to find a subject he was interested in,” she recalls. “It turned out that he was interested in marine biology. He watched every marine biology video on *Learn360*. He was fascinated by the topic.”



Gates gave the student a notebook and asked him to write down the name of each video he watched, the date, and what he learned. Not only did this help him synthesize what he was learning about marine biology, it also helped him develop his English comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills.

“He was totally enthralled and would come to the library very enthusiastically, asking if he could get on *Learn360*,” she says. **“Nobody could believe he was sitting still, but he soaked up that information like a sponge.”**

Self-directed learning is particularly impactful for today’s students, who prefer to learn with video. According to the 2019 Speak Up Survey from the nonprofit organization Project Tomorrow, 49 percent of students in grades 6–12 say they use YouTube for self-directed learning at home.

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ABOUT HOLLY GATES

Highly regarded for bringing enthusiasm, passion, joy, and a sense of humor into the library, Holly Gates has been the librarian at Central Middle School in Honolulu, Hawaii, since 2016.



“Learn360 adds an extra something—a spark to their learning,”

says librarian Holly Gates, Central Middle School, Honolulu, HI

The platform’s ability to help personalize education and support self-directed learning is taking instruction at Central Middle School to a higher level.

“When students can sit down and learn whatever they want, at their own pace, they get excited to learn,” Gates concludes. “*Learn360* adds an extra something—a spark to their learning—that engages students.”