Online databases provide equity, help close achievement gaps in Kentucky district

Gale products feature curriculum-aligned content that's engaging for K-12 students

As the new director of library media services for the nation's 27th largest school district, Lynn Reynolds set out in 2017 to provide all students with access to the same quality resources designed to develop future-ready skills.

Today, more than 101,000 K-12 students at Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, use online databases by Gale, a Cengage Company, for current, trusted content from a variety of sources that span core subject areas.

"Having access to these authoritative databases is one of the first steps in improving student outcomes," says Reynolds. "It improves inquiry learning and personalized learning. Students are eager to do research because they can highlight information easily or have it read to them. They are better at critical thinking because they must decide which sources are best for the information they're seeking."

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Skills refined over time
With guidance from librarians, students learn entry-level research and problem-solving skills with *Kids InfoBits* in elementary school. They sharpen these and media literacy skills as they use more sophisticated resources such as *Gale In Context* in upper grades.

"I found the searching system to be really good and the quality of the resources to be splendid," said one ninth-grader during a recent survey that Project Tomorrow conducted on behalf of Gale. "It was easy to export the sources and navigate the database."

A fourth-grader in the same study said: "I liked how [*Kids InfoBits*] gave you all the facts about the topic so I had different things to choose from that helped me learn in ways that I liked."

Google integration
The online databases, which allow students to cite sources easily and properly, also enable teachers to load materials into Google Classroom, and students to save documents on Google Drive.

"The curated information gives librarians more time to build relationships with students and empower discovery," Reynolds says. "The databases provide access, which moves us to achieving better equity."

Long-term value
More than 88% of surveyed 12th-grade students from Jefferson County identified citations and depth of content as the most valuable features of the databases, while more than 80% of all middle and high school teachers surveyed cited ease of use and confidence in content accuracy. At one high school, 73% of the graduating seniors said that after using the Gale databases to support their learning in high school, they would like to use them for the same purposes in college.

"If we teach kids the right way to research and inquire and use these databases, we're going to create a nation of problem-solvers and critical thinkers," Reynolds says.

To learn more about how gaining access to these authoritative databases can improve student outcomes, register for Gale's webinar at **gale.com/outcomes**

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