Elizabeth Forward School District

The Elizabeth Forward School District (EFSD) is a rural school system in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, just south of Pittsburgh. After a decade of digital transformation, the system has become an exemplary school district and recognized as a member of the League of Innovative Schools by Digital Promise. As a coalition, the League consists of 114 forward-thinking school districts across the nation. It is also part of the *Future Ready School* initiative, a network of districts and leaders focusing on planning and transforming instruction and improving equity through personalized learning and the effective use of technology.

In 2010, EFSD became one of the first school districts in Pennsylvania to provide every K-12 student with a digital device (iPad). Beyond that initial phase, the system began to emphasize the integration of technology and personalized learning by tailoring a model for successful implementation. In 2017 and 2018, EFSD partnered with Modern Teacher and started to implement its *Digital Convergence Framework*, which emphasizes six key elements: Leadership, Instructional Models, Modern Curriculum, Digital Ecosystem, Personalized Learning, and Community. Ongoing implementation includes scaling work related to personalized learning, mastery learning, and learning plans.

A brief chronology of the district's work with technology-enhanced learning begins in 2010-2011, when EFSD became the first district in Pennsylvania to provide every student with a digital device and adopted a learning management system. In 2012-2013, the Elizabeth Forward Middle School became one of six schools to use the *SMALLab* (an interactive digital media space using gaming to reinforce engaging and kinesthetic educational opportunities for middle school students). From 2013 to 2014, The Dream Factory (combining the middle school's art studio, shop class, and computer science lab into one integrated innovation space) and MIT-approved FABlab (offering industrial-grade fabrication and electronics tools, wrapped in open-source software and programs) were created at Elizabeth Forward Middle and High Schools. The system adopted the Modern Teacher Framework in 2017-2018. In the Summer of 2019, the district adopted the Canvas Learning Management System. Digital Learning Environments are scaled to include all EFSD staff by January 2020. In March 2020, the system switched to remote learning after one day of school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Karen Cator, President and Chief Executive Officer of Digital Promise, "Elizabeth Forward is a living example of the triumph of opportunity over challenge in American education." Additional highlights of the system's commitment to technology integration, personalization, and experiential learning include its first foray into the transformation process: i.e., the creation of an Entertainment Technology Academy, a classroom that does away with traditional structures in favor of a flexible and collaborative learning space. Teachers use game design theory to offer engaging, effective English, math, art, design, and computer science curriculum. This Lighthouse System next transformed the static high school library into an attractive hangout space with comfortable seating, gaming consoles, a stag, and state-of-the-art audio and video production studios.

In partnership with Chevron and ETC, the system built an interactive Energy Lab for middle school students to use inquiry learning to investigate Earth, space, and energy concepts. This is one of multiple examples of the district's commitment to using technology to reinforce inquiry-based and personalized learning of required academic standards. It also reflects the extensive work underway to engage cross-institutional partnerships with regional and national education innovators to advance the work. For example, the district is actively involved in *Personalized Learning Squared*, a collaborative project piloted by the LearnLab at Carnegie Mellon University and the Center for Urban Education at the University of Pittsburgh. This program aims to use artificial intelligence learning software to support personalized mentoring and tutoring with the goal of addressing the opportunity gap, especially in mathematics. This process has also greatly enhanced the system's approach to progress monitoring, including ongoing use of NWEA MAP Growth Data to reinforce and disseminate the most effective and engaging pedagogical strategies teachers are using in their classrooms.