



SUCCESS STORY

C I S C O A C K N O W L E D G E S S U C C E S S A N D A C C O M P L I S H M E N T S

Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA
95134-1706

Veteran Teacher Inspired by Cisco Networking Academy Training:

TechBoston Supports Training for Local Academies

At Charlestown High School in Boston, both teachers and students find the Cisco Networking Academy Curriculum a valuable addition to the classroom. Veteran math teacher turned Cisco-certified instructor Leo Carey describes the curriculum as an “innovative and supportive way to teach high technology.” He says: “I give a preview, a review, and let them fly on their own.” Through the support and leadership of TechBoston, his model will spread to many schools throughout the city.

Background

As Carey describes it, the first 24 students in the program represented a typical urban classroom with average success in school and limited language abilities. Their dedication and achievement in the program took even Carey by surprise.

“After the first two or three months, the kids really started getting into it,” he says. “We set them up with college visits and industry meetings to see where the curriculum could take them. By the end, 20 of the 24 had entered secondary schools pursuing careers in technology.”

Carey is now a Regional Academy Instructor with three Local Academies in Boston and seven outside the district. TechBoston, funded by the Boston School Department to develop technology support and training in the district, coordinates funding, training, and resources to support the adoption of high level technology courses in the district and the community.

Challenge

“We’ve done a lot of soul searching to figure out why this technically difficult and challenging curriculum was so successful with these students,” says Carey. He concludes that success came from two factors: the relevance of the material and the self-paced structure of the curriculum.

Students visit online employment bulletin boards, and speakers from local businesses visit the classroom to show that Cisco certification equates to high-paying jobs and careers. The opportunities motivate students to study networking, while developing skills in literacy, math, and science. They learn that Cisco certification not only leads to well-paying jobs, it also provides an income to support them through college.

The built-in assessment and curriculum structure requires students to master concepts before moving on to the next lesson. This alleviates pressure to move too quickly or wait for others to catch up. Many BPS students are non-native English speakers, and the visuals in the curriculum help them learn concepts more





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quickly. They also can review materials in other languages, making it more accessible to bilingual students. According to Carey: "A higher percentage of students stay engaged for a longer period of time."

To expand the model from one school to the whole region, Charlestown turned to TechBoston. Working in collaboration with the BPS Office of Instructional Technology and School-to-Career, TechBoston helped recruit teachers for Local Academies and paid for their training.

Solution

The Academy curriculum changes the role of the instructor to be more supportive of students as they study and prepare for exams. For many teachers, this new curriculum provides an opportunity to learn new skills, and TechBoston makes sure they have the equipment and support needed to implement good models like the Cisco Academy.

"The teachers we've trained are veteran teachers who are invested in the school system," says Felicia Vargas, TechBoston Assistant Director, Boston Public Schools. "It's their avocation, their love. They want to teach."

Like most states, Massachusetts has high-stakes exams to determine how students and teachers are doing each year. By aligning the Cisco curriculum to standards, TechBoston clarifies for schools how to create standards-based educational plans and integrate the program into a small learning community or pathway. Internships and real-world exposure helps motivate the students to push through the challenging lessons and difficult material. Working the BPS School-to-Career department, TechBoston makes student work-based learning opportunities a priority. Through grants, Academy students are hired to provide technical support to local businesses and community-based organizations such as the Boston Public Library.

Future Plans

Leo Carey has hosted visits from more than 100 schools, and 35 have adopted the curriculum. "Cisco is on the leading edge of training and curriculum," says Carey, "It is the wave of the future." The Academy program has articulation agreements with local community colleges to give students credit when they graduate from high school.

The combination of motivated teachers, a coordinated regional plan, and a top-notch curriculum will continue to bring opportunity and inspiration to eager Boston Public School students.

