

GROWING UP WITH A JOY FOR RESEARCH

Kids InfoBits: Explore how this district is developing kids' research skills and putting young learners on a path to discovery.

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Angie Jameson
Library Media Specialist,
Chagrin Falls Exempted Village Schools
Chagrin, OH

BACKGROUND

Located just outside of Cleveland, Chagrin Falls Exempted Village Schools in Chagrin, Ohio focuses on individualized education for every student and strives to meet students where they need to be in terms of technology integration. Chagrin Falls serves pre-K through 12th grade students, with the schools divided into elementary (pre-K-3), intermediate (4-6), middle (7-8), and high school (9-12). While Chagrin is a small town, this district is leading the way in 21st-century learning by focusing on critical thinking, research, and problem-solving skills. Angie Jameson, library media specialist and former English teacher, develops the curriculum for library content in grades 7-12 in the district. In addition, she aids in writing the curriculum for the intermediate school.

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

CREATING A DEDICATED SPACE FOR RESEARCH

At the beginning of the school year, Jameson and her staff of library associates at the intermediate school built their library resources from scratch. Due to building renovations, space is tight for the 4-6th grade classes and Jameson doesn't have a large, dedicated place for print materials. With great ingenuity, Jameson created two pop-up libraries: one for frequently checked out books and one in a small, shared space. With a less than ideal setup, Jameson searched for digital resources to deliver quality content and integrate easily into the district's curriculum and workflow. "We definitely prefer *Kids InfoBits* in terms of what we can do in the very short time we have for library class, which is 36 minutes about one day a week," says Jameson. She adds, "The read-aloud option and ability to translate the content into any given language...that's what made us realize just how amazing the *Kids InfoBits* accessibility features are."

Another familiar challenge for Jameson is adequately preparing her students for conducting proper research—and getting them excited about it. As a high school teacher, Jameson spent a month teaching her 10th grade AP English class how to research, create citations, extract data, answer questions, and avoid plagiarism. "As soon as I became the district librarian, I met with the intermediate school library paraprofessionals who facilitate the classes and prepared them to design lessons focused on the research process," says Jameson. Her staff meets with students for a dedicated class about once a week, and she wants to be sure they're providing the support students need to be successful.

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■ BRIDGING THE GAP

CONTENT THAT FITS, AND LEAVES ROOM TO GROW

Every time Jameson hears that a class is doing research, she sends them an email reminding them to use their Gale resources, such as *Kids InfoBits*, *U.S. History In Context*, *World History In Context*, *Science In Context*, and *Opposing Viewpoints In Context*. Databases like *Kids InfoBits* allow students to explore age-appropriate content that's continuously updated to match elementary-level curricula. Students can dive into key subjects by exploring categories like animals, arts, geography, health, literature, social studies, people, and technology. Jameson adds, "Kids love the graphics! When we design lessons, we use the graphics to help guide the instruction." Plus, students can easily find appropriate content and news with a "child-friendly spin." *Kids InfoBits* features full-text essential content from notable publishers like Blackbirch Press®, U·X·L, and many others. "*Kids InfoBits* has been vetted appropriately to give kids information and avoid links to other articles they shouldn't be seeing," says Jameson. "It also delivers just the facts and then allows students to create meaning while conducting their own research." Maggie Stauffer, a paraprofessional who teaches intermediate library classes, adds, "It was fun to introduce the students to *Kids InfoBits*. They were surprised that this reliable information was available to them at school and at home."

Since Chagrin Falls is a technology-focused district, it requires resources that fit into student and teacher workflows. *Kids InfoBits* keeps up with those needs. It's integrated with G Suite for Education and Microsoft Office 365 tools, which enables users to easily share, save, and download content—including highlights and notes. It also has ReadSpeaker text-to-speech technology and article- and interface-level translations, which help ESL students, striving readers, and foreign language classes. This makes it easy for students to become comfortable with the research process early on so that by the time they're in high school and college those processes are second nature.

■ THE RESULTS

STRENGTHENING FUTURE-READY SKILLS

In the short time that Chagrin Falls Exempted Village Schools has been using *Kids InfoBits*, they've seen its value. Jameson has noticed an increase in usage and noted that her students stay engaged due to the vibrancy of the videos, magazines, graphs, and images. "I love the browsing ability that comes with *Kids InfoBits*. Introducing our students to research and synthesis skills using topics they are interested in results in much deeper engagement compared to assigning students a research topic while attempting to teach these difficult skills." Numerous benefits come from simply exposing young learners to research-friendly platforms like *Kids InfoBits*. When thinking back on her 10th grade class who had difficulty with citations, Jameson is excited that she and her team are actively introducing intermediate students to these practices—and building a strong foundation that is getting them excited about research!



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