

# Beyond Textbooks

Vail Unified School District, Vail, Arizona

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Beyond Textbooks (BT) is a comprehensive program of curriculum development, instructional improvement, student assessment, and intervention. It starts with standards: what students must learn. Next, a team of teachers and administrators “unwraps” documents to define what “good enough” looks like when students need to demonstrate an understanding of any particular state standard. From there, the team develops curriculum calendars for when the different standards will be taught and for how long. Then teachers are given liberty to figure out what specific materials and resources are needed for instruction. A wiki serves as a digital version of the curriculum as it is developed by instructors and content specialists. Other key elements include common formative assessments to check students’ mastery of the standards and an opportunity to reteach or enrich as part of daily interventions based on data collected from formative and quarterly benchmark assessments.

BT has completely changed the way the district does business. First, it digitized curriculum, making changes much more efficient. Long gone are the days of a curriculum change coming from the district office in the form of papers that had to replace old ones in every curriculum binder for every grade level at every school in a district. Each site once had a person in charge of all those curriculum binders who collected and updated them every year. When new standards come out, teachers and administrators are no longer



stuck in a conference room spending days preparing for the upcoming year by stuffing the mountain of binders. Educators link in to BT. All have access to every “binder,” which is updated in real time. BT allows teachers to do the things that really matter: differentiated instruction, reteaching ideas, and building connections with students and parents.

## THE BOARD'S INVOLVEMENT

Board members were involved in BT from the initial meetings in 2008. They provided full backing. They outlined specific goals on how to digitize the curriculum. One such goal was to have all core subjects up and running online in one year. They raised funds to get technology in every classroom in the district. Once the program was launched, the board continued to support it with goals attached to performance pay. When the board stood behind BT, the program grew and found solid roots. When Vail was approached about sharing its new

digital instructional playbook, the board strongly encouraged it. Vail was making academic strides it had never seen, and the board wanted to help others. The board continues to present the program around the nation.

## RESULTS

Vail went from being average in 2000, to being ranked as the top-performing district in the state of Arizona for the first two years the ranking system was in place. As the state rankings continued, districts continued to rise. At one point, three of the top five districts in the state were using BT. And, as BT has branched out beyond the state borders, similar results have been experienced. As such, since 2010, the BT staff has provided over 1,765 trainings across Arizona and beyond.

## CONTACT

Chief Executive Officer  
**Kevin Carney**

carneyk@vailschooldistrict.org  
www.vailschooldistrict.org