CHALLENGES

- How to emphasize research and critical thinking skills in a large, loud and often packed library.
- Organize library and its new resources in ways that meet each students' needs.

SOLUTION

- *Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL)*

RESULTS

- *GVRL* usage increases as regular classes are postponed in favor of research projects.
- Student research skills improve as does efficiency when students choose *GVRL* sources for use in research projects.

Anne Abney

Librarian, Creekview High School, Georgia

Anne Abney, teaching librarian at Creekview High School northwest of Atlanta, is responsible for fulfilling lofty student achievement goals in a busy environment typical of a collaborative learning space. "As the center of physical as well as digital resources, we act as the hub for all research and project-based work for the school. We work to provide a welcoming space so the library is packed almost all the time and not exactly a quiet place."

At Creekview, research projects are structured through a collaborative effort between Abney and the teachers. The teachers provide Abney with a project overview which enables her to search *GVRL's* extensive database and select resources relevant to the project. Abney and the teachers work together to address student research needs in the library. Instead of going to their regular class room, students stay in the library for the duration of the project," Abney said.

The extended time Abney has with students provides her an opportunity to emphasize the research and critical thinking skills the district has identified as student priorities. However, ensuring students acquire the desired skill sets can be a challenge on such a large campus. It's why Abney relies on the library's digital collection to break through the noise.

EDUCATOR UTILIZES GVRL TO MEET UNIQUE STUDENT NEEDS

Abney, a relatively new librarian at Creekview High, is tasked with organizing her home away from home in a way that meets the needs of students who are at the library for a variety of reasons. It's one reason the district chose Cengage Learning's *Gale Virtual Reference Library* (*GVRL*), a cloud-based platform that provides digital research and educational resources to libraries, as a foundation on which to build.

The school's focus on developing students' analytical skills means Abney is heavily relying on the scholarly sources provided by *GVRL*. To combat all the noise characteristic of a 21st-century library, Abney has developed an academic area where students can work in peace and also hone their independence. "I introduce the digital resources for the project, let the students begin research on their own, and then help them on a point of need basis when they have questions," Abney said.

High quality research resources such as *GVRL*, Abney suggests, help students navigate reliable digital content and assess which resources address their research question. "The structure of Gale is awesome," Abney boasted. "We're able to create an environment in which students are comfortable navigating and analyzing resources and able to become skilled researchers."

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IMPROVES AS STUDENTS BECOME MORE EFFICIENT

"*GVRL* is really helping us achieve our goals," Abney said, referring to the critical thinking skills students are acquiring in the library. "The feature we love is that students

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have unlimited access to eBooks and can all look at the material at the same time." Abney credits that unlimited access, in part, with improving the quality of student research and thematic interest projects. The citation tool within *GVRL*, which provides students with instant access to pertinent materials and properly cited sources, has also been a key factor in student achievement.

The tools students are using to develop their new skills are also making them more efficient. "The students have realized that using *GVRL* can actually save them time, especially when teachers require credible sources to be cited in their projects." Higher academic standards like these have exposed students to material they cannot find on Google. "I tell them Google is easy because we use it every day, but students are now choosing the credible databases in *GVRL* rather than Google," Abney said.

GVRL SHAPING STUDENTS' FUTURES BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

The impact *GVRL* is having on students is actually helping to shape their future in higher learning and the work force. Creekview High recently purchased a digital career information collection that students use to conduct research and help determine what they might want to do regarding future employment. "We do senior project research where students choose a passion and research academic as well as career requirements throughout the school year," Abney said. Once students complete their research they're required to create a relevant product and present their findings to a panel of judges before they're permitted to graduate. "It's almost like a thesis," Abney remarked. "They learn about what they do and do not want to do, and *GVRL* certainly supports that process through its wide range of resources."

Source Code: M15010191