



Melanie Claybar

English Teacher, Little
Cypress-Mauriceville
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Challenge

- Having limited access to research materials students need to develop critical thinking skills necessary for research papers.
- Providing students with vetted research materials from multiple viewpoints that cannot be found online due to school district's web filters designed to block some Google searches.

Solutions

- *Gale's Opposing Viewpoints In Context (OVIC)*

Results

- Online database saves teachers time by curating in-depth collections of authoritative research materials that help students develop well-rounded perspectives on issues.
- Students using OVIC begin citing better sources and create higher quality research papers.



Success Story

Time-Strapped Instructor Searches for Ways to Provide Students with Research Topics and Vetted Resources

Melanie Claybar, an English teacher at Little Cypress-Mauriceville Consolidated School District, often felt as if her hands were tied. Claybar teaches AP English Language Composition to some of the 1,100 students in the Orange, Texas school district. But she often found herself lacking the resources necessary for her students to create the well-rounded research papers with authoritative sources she expected.

"We were just so limited on the topics students could choose," Claybar said. "I would have to develop a list of topics and identify a collection of websites I knew were credible for students to use. It took a lot of time on the teacher's part."

Spending time in the library searching for books on specific research topics took Claybar out of the classroom and made it more difficult to achieve her objective: providing an array of research materials that introduce both sides of a topic to students. "They can use Google," Claybar said. "But the district has strict filters for controversial topics so the students just can't research some of those topics on the open web."

It was a problem that limited the research topics from which students could choose and also impacted the quality of the papers students produced.

Digital Solution Connects Students With Unlimited Supply of Vetted Research Material

One of the keys to formulating a well-rounded persuasive paper, according to Claybar, is having instant one-stop access to a larger supply of vetted resources both students and teachers could trust. All of that became a reality when the district adopted Cengage Learning's *Opposing Viewpoints in Context (OVIC)*, a premium online database that provides differing perspectives of an issue and helps students develop information literacy and critical thinking skills, as well as the confidence to draw their own valid conclusions.

"Now I'm not limited at all," Claybar said. "OVIC identifies authoritative resources for research papers and does all of the work teachers used to do."

The students at Little Cypress-Mauriceville Consolidated understand the quality of their work hinges, in part, on creating well-rounded research papers. OVIC empowers students to dig deeper and illuminate a range of perspectives they otherwise might omit. For instance, the database houses tens of thousands of pro/con viewpoints, reference articles, and multimedia elements students can access on any device.



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“The students really get to see both sides,” Claybar said. Besides a variety of resources covering today’s hottest social issues, *OVIC* is now assisting students with cross-curricular research in classes such as science, social studies, current events, and language arts.

Academic Performance Improves as Students Using *OVIC* Create Higher Quality Research Papers

“I tell students that Google or Wikipedia can be great places to start their research,” Claybar said. “But I also stress they can’t use those resources because they may not be accurate or true.”

Each of the resources housed in *OVIC* is vetted so students aren’t left wondering about a source’s credibility. In fact, *OVIC* even breaks out the materials into a hierarchy that includes primary sources, videos, images, magazines and journals. “The students know the resources are true,” Claybar said. “If we’re researching a topic like racial profiling, *OVIC* allows me to quickly find two different opinions to look at as a class and discuss how people try to convince us what to believe.”

Greater access to vetted material from multiple perspectives, according to Claybar, is one reason students are now turning in research papers of which they can be proud. “I do see the quality of sources is better,” Claybar said. “The sources they’re using now are more academic than something they might randomly find online and it’s also easier for them to find resources on a particular topic.”

Students Rely On *OVIC* to Help Identify Higher Quality Research Topics

“The students really like it,” Claybar said. “It’s a really smooth search process and I would certainly recommend it to other teachers on our campus.”

Besides being user friendly and intuitive, Claybar suggests *OVIC* is especially useful for teenagers who can, at times, struggle to find compelling research topics. “They get tunnel vision,” Claybar said. It’s why *OVIC* contains a feature called the Topic Wheel, which helps students who have broad topic ideas generate narrower areas of focus. “It helps broaden their minds and provides different perspectives for the ones who are single minded.”

However, it’s the automatically generated source citations many students value most. Typically, when students forget where they found a particular fact they’ll cite Google. “We have that chat a lot, I tell them Google is not your source,” Claybar said. With *OVIC*, citations are listed at the bottom of each source.

“They love that the citations are already done for them,” Claybar said.



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