

Timely Content Enters K-12 Classrooms Through Thomson Gale's ClassTrac

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Web-enabled resource aligned to state standards better engages students and extends the life of textbooks

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich., Oct. 6 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Thomson Gale, the world's leading reference publisher and a part of The Thomson Corporation (NYSE: TOC; TSX: TOC), today announced the launch of ClassTrac, the most academically efficient and cost effective way to leverage schools investment in instructional material. Designed to engage students, ClassTrac delivers relevant and timely content aligned to state standards while providing a dynamic instructional environment designed to address the varied learning styles of all students. ClassTrac is not only cost-effective and efficient for teachers, but also serves to extend the life of textbooks by integrating real world events within the context of learning.

With recent federal and state mandates driving standards and accountability, educators are increasingly seeking resources that can help students achieve their learning goals. Additionally, schools need to solve a fundamental problem in the accountability movement: the gaps between what is taught and what is tested. In many cases textbooks and other materials in the K-12 education system are often out of date by the time they arrive in schools.

"ClassTrac fills the gap in existing curriculum by engaging students with interactive exercises, self-assessment and multimedia tools," said Ben Mondloch, Executive Vice President, K-12 Markets for Thomson Gale. "This digital resource was created to supplement the static nature of existing textbooks with timely and current content while enabling cost savings by extending the life of textbooks."

ClassTrac has already proved its value through a pilot program in the state of Texas. The Texas Education Agency was concerned with student achievement on the high-stakes statewide test, TAKS, acknowledging that the state's middle school social studies and high school biology textbooks did not provide adequate coverage of rapidly changing areas of the curriculum. ClassTrac was adopted by the state to offer students access to current events content and materials. Additionally, the multimedia delivery and 24/7 access ensured inspired, interactive learning and improved student achievement.

According to a survey of the Texas pilot teachers:

- * 84% said that ClassTrac had a moderate to major impact on student's preparedness for the TAKS exam
- * 89% said that ClassTrac had a moderate to major impact on students' engagement in learning
- * 88% said ClassTrac had a moderate to major impact on students' basic understanding of concepts addressed

"The students really enjoyed using ClassTrac," said Mary Bonetati, a biology teacher in Klein Oak High School (Spring, Texas). "It was visually compelling for them and the lessons were engaging and enjoyable," she added.

Bonetati had only one of her classes participate in the pilot, using the other class as the control group to compare results of the TAKS. According to Bonetati, "The students that used ClassTrac fared better on the TAKS than the class that didn't have access to the digital resource."

ClassTrac is now available with numerous schools already using the product. The first release covers high school science in the disciplines of biology, chemistry, physics and earth sciences. Schools subscribing to ClassTrac receive thorough product training to ensure effective implementation of the program. Training may be delivered online or onsite, depending on what schools prefer. On a monthly basis ClassTrac "webinars" deliver supplemental instruction to virtual user groups representing a wide array of schools and districts. This setting encourages teachers to share individual best practices in using ClassTrac in their school. Participating schools receive usage statistics for participating campuses, enabling teachers and administrators to track in-school and home usage.

"Various legislation and technology have accelerated the pace of change in education, creating unique challenges for districts, schools and teachers," said Gordon Macomber, president of Thomson Gale. "In today's K-12 markets more than ever before every dollar counts and performance is more closely scrutinized than in the past. ClassTrac is a simple and effective way for administrators and teachers to greatly extend the investment in instructional resources, including traditional print textbooks."

Information about ClassTrac can be accessed through www.galeschools.com/ClassTrac.

About the Thomson Corporation and Thomson Gale

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