

STRENGTHENING RESEARCH SKILLS IN SCIENCE AND BEYOND

Gale Science In Context: Learn how transitioning from print to digital resources helped improve grades and more.

“We emphasize that one of the most important skills students need when they leave here is the ability to effectively search and find high-quality research resources, and Gale’s databases are an essential component of this skill set.”



Jennifer Sawyer
Library Media Technician,
San Luis Obispo High School

A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

Visitslo.com describes San Luis Obispo as a city that “enjoys all the spoils of a life well lived on the California Coast.” Their high school is no exception to that.

“We have excellent opportunities for both college and career pathways,” says Jennifer Sawyer, San Luis Obispo High School library tech. “Our students are bright, engaged, and altogether fun to work with ... and we enjoy a highly supportive parent community. Our dedicated and hard-working staff is constantly seeking to provide our students with a top-notch educational experience. Plus, we are fortunate to be in close proximity to a wonderful community college and a top-notch university with Cuesta College and Cal Poly CSU located in our town.”

As part of that preparedness, the school’s staff and nearly 1,400 students have access to Gale’s databases via the County Office of Education portal. That includes *Science In Context*, an engaging online resource which provides contextual information on significant science topics with millions of full-text articles that include national and global publications as well as 200+ experiments, projects, and top reference content. Content is aligned to national and state science standards, including Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

EQUIPPING STAFF AND STUDENTS TO SUCCEED

It can be difficult to maintain current information when you are relying on printed publications alone. Sawyer said they saw the trend was shifting toward digital research, and realized that they needed to provide their students and staff with quality content.

“It became apparent that we needed to add to our academic database offerings to fill the gaps as we weeded our print collection of out-of-date materials,” says Sawyer. “It was particularly noticeable as our Science Department began preparations for a move to NGSS and needed access to the best materials possible to fulfill new curriculum needs while textbooks and other materials were being adopted.”

Amanda Ballentine, a science teacher at the school, agrees. “All-new information is important. Especially with microbiology and marine biology where there is a new species every year,” said Ballentine.

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“Prior to Gale, it used to take hours to find information that was credible and current, at the right reading level. Now, I can find articles faster and so can my students.”



Amanda Ballentine
Biology Teacher,
San Luis Obispo High School

■ BRIDGING THE GAP

PROVIDING ACCESS TO TIMELY AND RELIABLE INFORMATION

“We were able to explore *Science In Context*, *US History In Context*, and *World History In Context* databases on a trial basis,” said Sawyer. “All three were given the thumbs up by students and teachers and we successfully added them to our portal offerings.”

According to Sawyer, adding resources such as *Science In Context* solved the “one book, one student” issue. “The entire class is able to access the information instead of relying on sharing a copy or purchasing class sets of materials that may quickly become dated,” she said.

Ballentine uses Google Classroom—part of G Suite for Education—available with many of Gale’s online resources. She said that beyond walking students through how to use a database, her first lesson is always how to research properly.

“NGSS and CCSS call for students to draw their own conclusions,” said Ballentine. “I know the information they are providing (via Gale’s databases) is credible. That wasn’t always the case before.”

■ THE RESULTS

GREATER ENTHUSIASM AND INCREASED USAGE

According to Sawyer, the school has seen a significant increase in usage since they expanded their database offerings. She said they experienced a **120% increase** in database sessions from the 2013-14 school year to 2014-15, followed by **another 26% increase** in the 2015-16 school year.¹

As they continued to add databases, Sawyer said teachers became more excited to see the range and depth of sources available. Likewise, she said once students became aware of how the databases worked, including how to search and access information, they became more engaged.

That assessment rings true for Ballentine, who said that **a greater percentage of students are completing their assignments successfully—which has led to improved grades.**

¹Based on independent 2013-2016 San Luis Obispo High School database tracking studies.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PRODUCT

 gale.com/scienceincontext