



**Ready Students Outperform Their Peers** **Ready**  
 A study of over 1 million students proves it. [See the Research](#)

[Home](#) > [Feature](#) > Steps to Achieving Successful Digital Programs

FEATURE

# Steps to Achieving Successful Digital Programs

By Dawn Reiss — District Administration, Feb 2013  
 1/14/2013



Five years ago, the Mooresville Graded School District in North Carolina went digital, with laptops and MacBook Air computers districtwide.

The district has not purchased a textbook in over five years, with the exception of those required for high school Advanced Placement classes.

And with that, graduation rates and test scores are rising. On state tests in reading, math and science, an average of 89 percent of students across grades met proficiency standards in 2012, compared with 73 percent four years ago. Graduation rates are up 10 percent over four years ago, to 90 percent, and more graduates are attending college, the rate rising 8 percent to 88 percent in 2012.

But before going digital, administrators had to line their ducks in a row. First, the school leaders rallied the community behind the process with a townhall forum, telling people what they were doing and why.

Scott Smith, chief technology officer at Mooresville, and others told them that becoming digital citizens was an important step to help prepare kids for jobs that didn't exist yet.

To fund the project, Smith says Mooresville used local, state, and federal money, including a state grant and a grant from Lowe's Home Improvement, whose corporate headquarters are located in the city. When construction was beginning on Mooresville Intermediate School before it opened in 2008, Smith says the district didn't spend money wiring the school, but instead reallocated some of the funding toward building a wireless infrastructure. The district bought 4-6 person tables, for collaboration, which are 20 percent cheaper than desks, Smith says.

The district also leases computers, costing about \$1 million a year to lease some 4,000 laptops. "We know in a few years we are going to upgrade," he says.

And before students receive a laptop, they undergo training with their parents about expectations and usage, including learning about cyberbullying and what are considered appropriate searches on the internet. It also includes how to care for and maintain a \$1,000 machine and how to access assignments and grades electronically. In addition, the district rewrote its student code of conduct and acceptable-use policy.

[Subscribe FREE to DA](#)

**GET EBOOKS**  
 from OverDrive's catalog

Over 3 MILLION titles

[LEARN MORE](#)

**Readying Students for College and Career: A 3-Step Approach**

[WATCH NOW ON DEMAND](#)

Sponsored by **fuel**education  
 the new power of learning