

Two math teachers spread the word about USA Testprep

With more than 138,000 assessments completed and close to 800,000 activities logged, Pickens County schools recently ranked among the top 5 percent of Georgia schools for their successful use of the USA Testprep platform. Two teachers have been instrumental in the county's utilization of the standards-aligned platform. Tammy Duncan and Tom Kleinberg have been teaching for 21 years and six years, respectively. We recently interviewed Tammy and Tom to gain insight into how they're using the platform, what they think teachers should appreciate the most about the USA Testprep, and tips for collaboration.

USATP: How were you introduced to the USA Testprep platform?

TD: Tom and I attended a math conference in 2017 and sat in on a session about personalized user learning that really resonated with both of us. We loved the idea of combining that with standards-based grading. At the time, we were creating our own quizzes using a Google form, which was time-consuming. I knew a teacher at our high school was using USA Testprep so we decided to look into it.

TK: We started playing around with it to see what it was all about and we were both very excited about the standards-based grading. The rigor is incredible.

TD: The rigor is my favorite part of the platform. It makes the kids think on a higher level.

USATP: And Tom--what's your favorite part?

TK: I love the built-in remediation. We use your Green Dot Challenge a lot. We give the kids a quiz, then they take a test on each standard. They know they need to keep working until they earn an 85 on any particular standard. It makes remediation so much easier as the kids know what they have to do and they can work on it on their own time--they don't have to be sitting in front of their teacher.

USATP: Can you explain what your collaboration process look like for creating assessments?

TK: We started off sitting down in the same room together to create them but--due to time--now one of us will create the assessment, and the other will tweak.

TD: We've worked together for so long that we've built-up a trust. That's key.

TK: We also tweak our joint assessments. I teach an honors class and Tammy teaches both an accelerated class and an RTI class. We'll add or reduce the number of questions and change the rigor based on which group we're teaching.

USATP: How do you use the data provided by the platform?

TK: One quick way I use it is to check myself as a teacher. I'll compare quiz averages by class and if there's a gap, I'll look at what I did differently in one class to the next. Or if I see that the school average on a quiz is 85 and I have a class that scored 70, what did I do wrong? I like that it gives me insight so that I can go back

in and teach to areas that were missed.

TD: We also use the data for some friendly class competition. We'll show the kids charts and I'll say, "Okay, first squad scored this on the quiz. Can you beat it"? Or--"We need to beat Mr. Kleinberg's class!" (Laughter.)

USATP: Let's talk about the training you offer other teachers. What's involved with that?

TK: We offered a USA Testprep training course over [last] summer and 20-25 teachers showed up. The fact that they're willing to give up their time to learn about the platform indicates they're paying attention to the results we're showing, and they're interested.

TD: It's gratifying, too. One of the other schools came to our training and started using USA Testprep. At the end of the year they were so excited because their milestone scores went up. And I know an algebra I teacher at the high school is using the platform to incorporate personalized learning. I've been told she's seeing good results.

USATP: Final question. What do you want teachers to know about USA Testprep?

TD: I would be devastated if my county didn't purchase it. DEVASTATED. It's so accessible and easy for us and the students. It's just amazing.

TK: Teachers don't have time to put in on assessments. Having a platform like this allows us to use our time to teach.

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