

# Beyond Textbooks

Vail Unified School District

Remember that exciting first day of the school year? Inevitably, our teacher eventually handed out the textbooks. After adding our name to the list inside the front cover we'd look through each book to see how badly previous user had marked it up. We then flipped through the book to look at the pictures and the "headlines." *After all, we knew that the things in the textbook were things we would be learning for the next nine months.*

Most of us educators had a similar experience when we became teachers. At the beginning of the year our principal handed us textbooks. (The only difference being we finally got the edition with all the answers to those questions at the end of every chapter!) We looked through the textbooks with even more care, as *we knew the textbook determined what we were going to teach that year.*

*No more.* We still hand out textbooks to most of our teachers and students, but the textbook does not determine what is taught. *State standards mandate what we must teach.*

In order to make sure students learn all the important standards each year, our Vail teachers and curriculum staff have put those standards on a "curriculum calendar." *The calendar tells teachers what they are going to teach and when they are going to teach it.* One huge advantage of this approach is that all Vail teachers at a particular grade and subject area are teaching the same thing at the same time. They work together, share resources, share ideas and help each other re-teach students who didn't learn the standard the first time it was taught.

Textbooks have been reduced to, at best, just one of many resources teachers use to teach the standards. In fact, *thanks to the internet, there is now a virtual ocean of information and resources available to teachers.* Teachers can grab outstanding material from a host of resources, including: iTunes University, Arizona Department of Education, NASA . . . the list goes on and on and on! There is way *too much* material available. No one teacher can possibly find the time to sift through it all to find the very best stuff to help students learn the specific standard.

In Vail, we have come up with a way to solve that problem. We have come up with a program to help our teachers efficiently find, share and use the best resources available. The system is called *Beyond Textbooks.*

It is really quite simple. Curriculum calendars are being put in digital form, making them easy to access and update. When a teacher clicks on a specific standard, a web page appears. On the web page are the resources that can be used to teach that standard. Those resources may include lesson plan material, links to other web pages, hints for teaching the standard and so on. This calendaring tool is called *VICCI (Vail's Instructional Curriculum Calendar Initiative).*

These resource web pages are being filled and updated by Vail teachers. Our outstanding teachers have been doing a great job of sharing their materials and good ideas with other teachers in their own schools. Now they can find and share the best instructional material with their colleagues across the district.

13801 E. Benson Highway • Vail, Arizona 85641 • Mailing Address: P. O. Box 800 • Vail, Arizona 85641  
Phone: (520) 879-2000 • FAX: (520)879-2001  
web site address: [www.vail.k12.az.us](http://www.vail.k12.az.us)