



Saving teachers time across disciplines at Woodland Hills School District

At a Glance:

Superintendent Dr. Daniel Castagna brought Scribo by Literatu to Pennsylvania's Woodland Hills School District last school year. In record time, teachers across disciplines discovered Scribo's versatility and how much time it saves them with tasks like grading student essays. This dynamic AI writing tool provides immediate feedback, making it possible for educators to give each student in their classrooms the one-to-one support offered by a private tutor. Woodland Hills middle and high school teachers are excited to do even more with Scribo in the upcoming 2024-25 school year.

"Creating a space where teachers and students can meet, with technology serving as a seamless background tool, ensures that the focus remains on learning rather than the technology itself. It's not about AI at the end of the day—it's about teaching and learning. This approach empowers educators to teach and students to learn more effectively."

Mark Stanley, CEO, Literatu

About the district

Located eight miles east of the City of Pittsburgh, Woodland Hills school district serves approximately 3,300 students yearly at five schools. Primarily a residential community, it covers 13.5 square miles, has 12 municipalities and over 21,000 residences. Students and their families enjoy close proximity to metropolitan Pittsburgh along with numerous educational and cultural activities that take place at nearby University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University.

The Challenges

Woodland Hills administrators face issues common to many districts situated in large urban areas. Deeply invested in the long-term success of each and every young person in their jurisdiction, they grapple with finding ways to foster student achievement in their schools. Intrinsicly linked to post-secondary completion and earning power in the United States are verbal and written English language skills. Being able to write well is a game changer in closing equity gaps, this is especially true for English language learners.

For a student at the middle school level who struggles with writing, regular guided practice is the only viable intervention. Unfortunately, this level of individual attention is nearly impossible in a classroom setting. A single writing assignment in a 30-student classroom translates to a large volume of words a teacher must not only read through but correct in a constructive manner. As



the complexity of assignments increases in the middle and high school levels, grading and providing valuable feedback becomes more mentally exhausting and time-consuming.

Teachers in non-writing related subjects such as math or science must also interact with student writing. English language learners are developing their language skills as well as learning the specific content in every class they attend. A history teacher is, in essence, also a language teacher for these students.

At Woodland Hills, each senior needs to write a thesis to graduate and selects a favorite teacher to read through the first draft to give feedback. Without additional support, the science or industrial arts teacher not accustomed to interacting with student writing may find this task intimidating or frustrating because it pulls time away from their other obligations.

Woodland Hills School district urgently needed an intervention. Across the district, teachers called for better tools to support students in improving their writing. They also lacked a consistent system to give them more precise and accurate data on student progress and limitations. However, a one-size-fits-all approach would not be effective in addressing the diverse needs of students and teachers.

A solution that centers around teachers

Superintendent Castagna understood the potential of AI to accompany students and teachers in the classroom to provide these missing links. Having seen Scribo in action at last summer's ISTE conference in Philadelphia, Dr. Castagna immediately saw all it could provide teachers and students at Woodland Hills. Scribo was the perfect individualized solution that could integrate seamlessly into what teachers are already doing in their varied tasks.

Using Scribo to incorporate AI into assignments, rather than diverting students from their current activities, would provide personalized support without disrupting classroom flow. This tool allows for tailored feedback and assistance, enhancing the educational experience while maintaining the continuity of existing teaching methods.

In their own words:

The amount of time Scribo saves me as a teacher with student-related tasks has been very helpful. After students write they get detailed feedback that shows them areas they still need to improve. Scribo feeds them specific writing, grammar or vocabulary suggestions to help them understand how to correct what they wrote. Once students work through on their own and reach the target score, I can talk to them about concepts they need to understand like sentence fragments or sticky sentences.

—Thomas Maloney, English Teacher, Woodland Hills Senior High School



In terms of customer service, the attentiveness, the alignment with trying to do what's best for students and teachers, I've never experienced anything like that with any other vendor in my years teaching. I've dealt with the big ones and I've dealt with some other smaller ones. They want Scribo to really work for each teacher, not just for their bottom line, not just for notoriety. Simply, it's about the kids and what they can do to better and strengthen the experience for all students on various economic levels and various ways of learning.

-Dione Rawlings, AI Project Lead at Woodland Hills School District

From rollout to teachers making Scribo work on their terms

To assist with transitioning Scribo into classrooms and helping to support Woodland Hills' Online Academy, the district brought in Dione Rawlings, a Woodland Hills School District alum with a background in online schools administration. Unprecedented support from the team at Literatu helped her cover ground quickly.

Faced with a late rollout, Rawlings encouraged teachers in middle and high school to try Scribo at least once during the school year. Teachers were asked to find a way of using Scribo that made sense within the curriculum they already had planned and that would make their lives easier. In response to the normal apprehension that comes with new technology like AI, she emphasized that Scribo is designed to support teachers' particular style of educating students versus sidetrack them from it.

Rawlings was amazed by the innovative ways teachers made Scribo work for them on their own terms. Thomas Maloney has his 9th grade English class work independently on their assignments with Scribo until they reach a certain score such as 70% while he walks around the classroom. Using the screenshot overview of writing assignments for the entire school year, he talks with individual students about how they scored on each assignment, their progress and points out the different areas where they made improvements.

Math teacher Andrea Sisk uses Scribo with her high school students to boost critical thinking skills and for when students write chapter reviews about how they solved their math problems. High school English teacher Sara Curtain tied Scribo into her Google Classroom for reading comprehension questions which allowed students to pull quotes directly from the text they are reading.

Meanwhile at the middle school, reading teacher Teacher Edward Meli has led the charge by helping other teachers get started with Scribo. He uses Scribo for his students' literature responses. Before students ask him questions about their writing, he encourages them to see what Scribo has suggested and make those changes prior to getting his input. He is excited by how much time he saves grading and by the feedback the students get, things he would be unable to do as quickly without Scribo.



How Scribo supports all students

The data available through Scribo allows teachers to give students very specific feedback which helps students pinpoint where to focus to make the necessary adjustments to their work. This allows students to build skills incrementally. It also aids them in feeling visible whereas vague, generalized accolades actually creates the opposite effect for students.

“One-on-one interactions with students are life changing,” explains Rawlings who has provided tutoring over the course of her career. “AI tools like Scribo can help boost more kids with academics in that same way in a 30-student classroom.”

For language learners, Scribo supports their English learning while they are engaged in the content of various subjects. Scribo provides students clear expectations with micro steps to achieving them which helps reduce confusion and overwhelm, a particular benefit for ELLs and other students who need additional time or support to process information.

Looking forward to more success in 2024-25

Teacher Edward Meli is planning to kick off next school year at Dickson Preparatory STEAM Academy with a school-wide writing project using Scribo. Now that Maloney has enjoyed so much success using Scribo with his 9th graders, he plans to introduce it in his AP and honors English classes for longer writing assignments.

The core group of teachers who reaped the benefits of Scribo last year are also nudging their colleagues to test it out for themselves. Finally, Rawlings would like to put it directly in the hands of students. Students who struggle with writing can run a first draft of their writing for whatever class through Scribo to get feedback prior to a teacher grading it. They could build toward their futures by writing college and scholarship applications with the help of Scribo. She cannot wait to see other creative ways students find to use it.

“Literatu is focused on the love of learning, the love of making learning equitable. And as far as the support goes, I have yet to deal with anybody who's so supportive.” Dione Rawlings.