

Fulfilling a Virginia District's Need for Research-Based, Competent Professional Development

At Hampton City Schools, comprehensive PD provides personalized learning for teacher leaders in 32 schools

Hampton City Schools has long set the standard for professional development, offering a comprehensive and structured three-tiered teacher support program consisting of multiple teams to attract, recruit, develop, and retain faculty. As a large urban district welcoming two hundred to four hundred new teachers annually, Hampton City Schools recognizes the effort required to sustain such a program—and the critical need for high-quality, research-based resources.

"Our employees expect us to be the experts who train them on how to perform their jobs, so that means we have to have the knowledge, information, resources, and materials to deliver," says Director of Induction and Development Dr. Kimberly Richardson, who goes by Dr. Kim. "The need for research-based, competent materials is therefore very important for us."

This case study explores how Hampton City Schools has used **Gale eBooks: Professional Learning** to streamline professional development, foster teacher leadership, and create a sustainable model for continuous learning. It serves as a roadmap for other districts looking to elevate their professional learning initiatives and better support their educators.



Dr. Kim Richardson

Director of Induction and Development, *Hampton City Schools, Hampton, Virginia*

Hampton City Finds Research-Based, Competent Materials with Gale eBooks: Professional Learning

Dr. Kim, who is International Coach Federation certified, provides leadership training, which she describes as a stance rather than a verb. It involves equipping educators with the ability to have difficult conversations and "to presume positivity in situations where there might not be evidence of such." Dr. Kim also trains mentors, who work with multiple educators, including novice teachers, to build their knowledge base and awareness.

Dr. Kim oversees leadership training, mentor development, and a structured five-year induction program. "Our mentors need all of the mentoring information we can get because it's always changing, especially because of teacher retention issues," she explains. "Usually, we are used to working with people who've had more student teaching experience."

The district began looking for a solution to provide educators with additional support during the uncertain times of the pandemic. Gale eBooks: Professional Learning emerged as the ideal solution—providing immediate, on-demand access to expert-vetted materials from teacher-preferred publishers, like ASCD, Corwin, and Solution Tree. By integrating these resources into their professional development framework, the district empowers teachers, mentors, and administrators with the latest instructional strategies and leadership insights, ensuring continuous growth.

Increasing Efficiency and Optimizing Time Spent in Professional Development

In addition to serving as an extra support system for educators during COVID, the ease of access of *Gale eBooks* and ability to quickly highlight book excerpts also contributed to its selection.

Dr. Kim emphasizes the powerful yet precise search capabilities of *Gale eBooks: Professional Learning*. By delivering results at the chapter level, educators can quickly find relevant information without having to read the entire book. This allows professional learning sessions to focus on specific excerpts, key concepts, and practical applications—making discussions more targeted and time-efficient.

“We love that you don’t have to read the whole book,” says Dr. Kim. “You can simply type in a term, find the exact section you need, and have a meaningful conversation in fifteen to twenty minutes. It’s made our PD sessions much more actionable and engaging.”

Empowering Teacher Coaches and Mentors with Personalized PD

Hampton City leverages *Gale eBooks: Professional Learning* to empower mentors and coaches as they personalize professional development sessions for teachers in their schools. In addition to offering eBooks from leading publishers, the platform’s workflow integration features also support coaches and mentors with integrating their own collaborative learning opportunities into each session. This flexibility is crucial, as incorporating their insights and expertise enhances the effectiveness of educator training.

With a three-person team supporting thirty-two schools, Dr. Kim’s department developed a PD blueprint using *Gale eBooks* to equip teacher leaders with the tools to create their own PD sessions. The structured blueprints within *Gale eBooks: Professional Learning* cover key topics, such as classroom management, coaching and mentorship, cultural competency, family engagement, and mindfulness and wellness. This approach ensures that educators have access to practical, research-

backed strategies to support their growth and effectiveness in the classroom.

Supporting Teacher Leaders’ Natural Desire for More Information

Dr. Kim and her team recognize that teacher leaders are naturally driven to seek out new knowledge and refine their skills. To support this, they host monthly twenty-minute mini-PD sessions. Dr. Kim’s team promotes *Gale eBooks* on mentoring and coaching during these bite-size sessions so her group can reflect and use what they learned for their own PD with teachers. In these mini sessions, she always asks, “What can you grab from Gale to pull into your staff meetings each month?” This approach has been so effective that she’s considering calling these sessions “Gale Grabs.” By integrating small, digestible pieces of professional learning into their workflows, teacher leaders stay engaged without feeling overwhelmed.

For those looking for even deeper learning on a topic, *Gale eBooks* also enables what Dr. Kim refers to as a “Gale Dive.” “When an educator finds a compelling topic, they often continue to explore, clicking through related materials and deepening their understanding—sometimes for hours at a time. After a while, you look up and realize you’ve been diving for two hours,” she says.



Strengthening PD with the Strong Combination of Digital and Print

Gale eBooks offers the best of both worlds for professional development, combining the instant accessibility of digital resources with the tangible benefits of print materials. Dr. Kim explains that educators can quickly search for key concepts, highlight excerpts, and save them to their Google Drive, making it easy to access and integrate professional learning into their daily practice—all while everyone on the team is simultaneously doing the same.

Teachers who prefer the traditional reading experience can choose to print these digital resources after they've had time to digest the excerpts that they find useful. "Our teachers and leaders are just naturally so hungry for the information, and it's right there for us to download and print," says Dr. Kim. This blended approach ensures that every educator can engage with PD in the format that best suits their learning style, at the same time.

In fact, the resources that Dr. Kim shares from *Gale eBooks: Professional Learning* are so valuable that, at times, teachers buy physical copies of the books. "Sometimes our teachers really want to go deeper and get more involved in the text by physically highlighting passages," says Dr. Kim, explaining that digital and print PD resources can work in tandem, depending on the teacher's goal.

Engaging Faculty and Staff for Long-Term Success

Outside of conventional PD sessions, Dr. Kim's team includes *Gale eBooks: Professional Learning* in various newsletters throughout the year that she sends to different teacher groups. Depending on which stage of their careers they are in, Dr. Kim customizes the content. For example, she sends emails to new teachers during the "rejuvenation phase" of their first year, with links to specific chapters on the topic from titles by the award-winning educator and best-selling author Tina H. Boogren, PhD.

Recently, a survey Dr. Kim conducted indicated that her teachers find value in this consistent access to digestible digital PD resources. Dr. Kim created the survey to see how many of her new teachers engaged in content she shared from Carol Pelletier Radford, an author who writes on the success of novice teachers and their mentors. When surveyed, an impressive 90 percent of these novice teachers on Dr. Kim's email chain said they were actively reading the chapters she sent on a weekly basis.

Dr. Kim's team also prioritizes inclusivity in professional development, ensuring that instructional assistants, administrative staff, and other non-teaching personnel have access to relevant resources. She promotes the wide variety of *Gale's* resources so the whole staff can benefit from books on wellness or parenting, for example. "Everyone in Hampton City has the opportunity to access *Gale eBooks*, and we try to capitalize on that," she says.

For district leaders who would like to emulate Hampton City's program, Dr. Kim advises integrating PD resources into existing structures rather than treating them as an add-on to their strategic plan. "Identify where your division or district's focus is so that it can truly align, and then take the time on the back end to plan," she says. "Also, I highly recommend learning how the platform works before the rollout begins, so when the questions come, you are fully prepared to answer."

Luckily, *Gale* also has a dedicated customer success and training team for ongoing support. That team helps districts follow Dr. Kim's advice to plan and prepare for any questions, in addition to sharing best practices to integrate *Gale eBooks: Professional Learning* into their current workflows.

"They are truly there for you," shares Dr. Kim. "The support from *Gale* is amazing."

Learn more at gale.com/PDsupport

