FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 4, 2017

Newport-Mesa Unified School District

Newport-Mesa Unified School District Selected as Learning Impact Award Finalist

Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) is proud to announce that the Newport-Mesa Unified School District has been selected as a finalist for the 2017 Learning Impact Awards. The program recognizes outstanding innovative applications of education technology to address significant challenges facing education.

As the secondary English Language Arts (ELA) Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) team, Ms. Dana Kahawai and Ms. Ann-Marie Krenik are being highlighted for their innovated implementation of an application that supports students in writing and editing, with in-depth, real-time data.

To appropriately differentiate instruction and modify the curriculum for teaching writing, teachers need reliable skills-level data on student strengths and deficits. NMUSD uses benchmarking essays to evaluate how writing is taught and track student improvement to make better informed instructional decisions. However, since the scoring of writing assessment is often a manual and subjective process, the resultant data may be inconsistent and, at times, not fully reflective of student progress.

“Gone are the days of simple memorization and multiple choice tests; instead, assessments are inquiry-based, and require creative thinking and experimentation,” said Superintendent Dr. Fred Navarro.

Well aware of the needs and challenges posed by assessment scoring, the district implemented Turnitin Revision Assistant to improve student writing and teacher assessments of the writing. Revision Assistant is a cloud-based instructional resource that provides real-time assessments that generate reliable data on writing performance and growth, using district-wide benchmarks.
In fall 2016, every student in grades 7-12 wrote a narrative essay in response to a Revision Assistant prompt. Staff then loaded the scores into the district's data storage system. Following that, data analyses were conducted on the scores. Having these normed and objective scores allowed the district to:

- enable teachers to employ exemplar essays to norm their essay scoring against the district shared rubrics, resulting in improved consistency in their instructional and grading practices.
- drive adjustments to the district curriculum and scoring rubrics using data from the district-wide benchmark assessment.
- help individual teachers identify trends in their instructional practices or recognize individual/group needs and then reteach or adjust instruction for the classroom, groups, or individuals.

The secondary ELA team will present this initiative to the judging panel at the Learning Impact Leadership Institute in May. Their presentation will consist of a short video, a one-page detailed project flyer, discussions and demonstrations. Award winners will be announced at the conclusion of the event, which will take place on May 16 in Denver.

Created in 2007, the Learning Impact Awards program recognizes outstanding, innovative applications of educational technology and results achieved to address the most significant challenges facing education. Winners are selected by a panel of expert evaluators using a series of rubrics to evaluate eight dimensions for improving learning impact, including improving access, affordability and quality of learning.

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