



District Spotlight

Smithtown Central School District

Smithtown, NY

How One District Improved AP® Outcomes by 30%

Meet Dr. O'Brien

Since 2022, Dr. Stephanie O'Brien, director of science for K–12, has guided Smithtown Central's science programs. Under her leadership, the district has prioritized meaningful learning experiences that prepare students for advanced coursework.

A New York State master teacher with advanced degrees from Stony Brook University, she has presented nationally in literacy, inquiry instruction, flipped learning, and technology integration. Drawing on both classroom and leadership experience, she is committed to helping every student succeed in advanced coursework.



“What prompted you to add UWorld to your instructional resources?”

I chose UWorld after it was brought to my attention at a Long Island science director coordinator meeting. I hadn't heard of it before, but I thought it could help improve scores.”

— Dr. Stephanie O'Brien

At Smithtown Central, growth begins with data-driven collaboration. Each year, Dr. O'Brien and her team analyze AP® performance data to pinpoint learning gaps. They also take time to identify points of pride, or areas of strong student performance and practical teaching, to highlight what's working districtwide.

These insights guide teacher-led conversations that focus on solutions, not evaluations. They drive meaningful action, from refining curricula and professional development to adopting resources such as UWorld that build students' content mastery.

“Were there any specific UWorld features or aspects that stood out to you?”

One of the standout features of UWorld for me is the detailed answer explanations accompanying each question. These explanations help students understand why the correct answer is right and why the incorrect options don't work.”

— Dr. O'Brien

The continuous improvement process doesn't stay theoretical; it translates directly into classroom practice. Through ongoing data review and digital tools that reinforce conceptual understanding, Smithtown Central continues to refine how courses are taught.

For example, when data showed that students in combined Physics classes had differing needs, Dr. O'Brien's team recognized course structure as the barrier. Separating AP Physics I from Regents Physics allowed each to target distinct skills and pacing, leading to measurable performance gains in both exams.



30% AP Score Increase in Physics and Environmental Science

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How has UWorld benefited your students and your school or district?

The detailed explanations and interactive learning tools have helped clarify complex concepts. As a result, I've seen an improvement in our AP scores; our Physics and Environmental Science results have increased by 30%.”

— Dr. O'Brien

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How would you describe your overall experience with UWorld?

My overall experience with UWorld has been positive. The platform is user-friendly, and the resources are well-organized and readily accessible. The customer support team is responsive and helpful, making any interactions smooth and pleasant.”

— Dr. O'Brien



By turning **data into dialogue** and **dialogue into action**, Smithtown Central continues to strengthen teaching practices, refine curriculum, and equip teachers with the resources they need to help **every student succeed**.



**Want to do the same for your district?
Connect with us!**