West Warwick, a small Rhode Island community of 30,000 residents just 15 miles south of Providence, has a much higher poverty rate and lower median income than surrounding communities. It is saddled with many of the same problems of urban districts, including chronic absenteeism, high mobility rates, and limited resources. The district has three elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, one alternative setting school that houses pre-school students, and an alternative education setting middle school and high school. With a vulnerable population and limited funds, WWPS needed a way to increase student, teacher, and parent access to district-created resources.

As WWPS’s Director of Educational Reform, Compliance & Technology, Jim Monti was proud of the organic curriculum development model the district’s educators, administrators, and content specialists used to create rich units of study designed to improve student outcomes. Compiled using Google Drive™ online storage service, the content incorporates a wide array of resources, including aligned websites, paid subscription resources (digital and print), open educational resources (OERs), examples of student work, video clips of instructional practice (teachers engaged in a particularly important part of the lesson), and differentiated resources.
INSTANT ACCESS TO CURATED CONTENT ALIGNED TO CURRICULUM

“Collections solved the district’s curation problem,” Monti said. “Individuals now can continue to work on documents within Google Drive and add them quickly to a collection. District-housed units of study are readily available to every teacher and substitute teacher in the district. Instead of worrying about which Google Drive folder a document is in, users can simply share a collection.”

Within the first few weeks of inclusion in the early adopter program, the district’s Library Media Specialists and Curriculum Specialists were providing curated collections aligned to the district’s units of study and sharing them with teachers, administrators, and support personnel across the district. Collections makes it easy to share curated resources with students via Google Classroom.

Teacher-created documents, web pages, video clips, OERs, and paid content are continually added and shared with students, educators, and parents using the tools provided within Collections.

“The district found, in Collections, the perfect complementary tool to the curriculum development process,” Monti said. “District-level staff can create shared collections that are automatically shared with employees once those employees are added to a specific group. New employees no longer need to wait for a colleague to add them to a shared document or folder. We finally have a systemic solution to a systemic problem.”

Today, the West Warwick Public Schools district uses Collections as a vital curation tool in the development of rich units of study across curriculum areas. “With Collections in place, there is no need to worry about providing individual educators access to resources. Instead, educators can focus their energies on the real work – providing students with rich, engaging educational experiences. That’s the work, and that’s where the focus needs to be,” Monti said.

His advice to other districts? “You don’t have to look to the future or to an international, educational powerhouse like Finland to increase your ability to meet the needs of your students. Follett’s new Collections tool in its Destiny Discover suite is available right here, right now to help you better meet the needs of your educators and students.”