

Solution Backstory

Testing the mettle of online learning

Hundreds of thousands of children across the US are home-schooled each year, and millions more learn in a traditional school environment. But for children with Language-based Learning Differences (LLD), just figuring out what kind of teaching – and learning – will help them succeed can be a challenge. Waiting lists for slots in lab-based assessment programs, waiting for assessment results, and then placement into an appropriate program can test the patience and resources of families. Calvert Education Services need to find a way to assess and place more LLD students more quickly, and build a student base for its specialized curricula.

Calvert Education Services (CES), a non-profit, accredited, and internationally recognized education program provider, offers home schooling curricula supported by technological innovations. CES recognized that families of students with Language-based Learning Differences (LLD) could benefit from specialized curricula, but faced two challenges. First, pre-screening had always been a highly manual process, requiring scheduling and traveling to a lab facility for testing. Second, scoring and evaluating results of tests were time consuming. With a potential market of 10,000 student families and a waiting list growing longer every day, Calvert determined that only a web-based pre-screening tool could effectively reach this large group.

Mind Over Machines built the CES Home Schooling website in 2004, and implemented an online portal for student access to age/grade based resources and instruction in 2005. So Mind Over Machines had the credentials in building solutions encompassing demographic collection, curricula portals and e-commerce. CES again teamed with Mind Over Machines to design and implement an online pre-screening test... with an ambitious goal of going live in less than three months.

Assessing the assessment

CES, together with their partner, The Jemicy School, developed content for a unique online test encompassing both encoding and decoding assessment to determine if their child fits the profile of an LLD participant. Mind Over Machines worked with CES to identify a technology solution emphasizing simple, hassle-free registration, test-taking, administration, and follow-up. The solution had to accommodate the special needs of LLD students, provide uncomplicated access for parents, and be efficient for CES to administer.

In six weeks, Mind Over Machines developed and deployed the Verticy Learning Academy Online Assessment. It features easy registration, login and save functions (allowing students to complete the pre-screening in multiple sessions) and a simplified MP3 player integrated with the questions. For administrators, Mind Over Machines built in reporting tools, the ability to view the status of any test, and customizable email notifications to provide personalized follow-up to students and their parents. Constant interaction between the team and the staff of CES ensured that there were **no surprises** going into production.

Well maybe one surprise...

CES conducted an email campaign prior to going live with the online assessment. *Four hours* after go-live, 52 students had signed up, representing a *40 percent response rate!* Within 30 days, CES expanded their prospect base and had nearly 400 students register for the assessment, far surpassing anyone's expectations. Instead of going on a waiting list, driving to a lab and waiting weeks for results, students and their parents have a convenient, quick and comprehensive assessment to find the best program for achieving academic success. And CES can reach into and accommodate a large portion of the LLD market.

Mind Over Machines combines the best in user experience design with custom web application development that meets the real business needs of its clients. Because it shouldn't take a wizard to realize that it's people using technology that keep business running... and students making the grade.

"Working with Mind Over Machines has been a wonderful experience. They were very responsive to our needs and outlined our business requirements in great detail...resulting in a successful project."

*-Jean C. Halle, President
Calvert Education Services*
