



Customer Spotlight Q&A:

Hillsborough Community College

Kevin Reed

Program Manager for the Fire Academy

Can you briefly tell us about your organization and your role there?

I am the Program Manager for the Fire Academy at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Florida. I started teaching here in 2015 and have been running the academy since 2017. Before this, I was a Fire Captain (28-year veteran) for Tampa Fire Rescue.

What initially led you to consider the Public Safety Group (PSG) as a provider for fire training materials?

It was really a cascade of various things. In 2020, COVID shut down pretty much everything. Fire can't really be taught fully online here in Florida, particularly Firefighter II, but we began looking at online media to help take some of the work online to keep students engaged during shutdowns. Some at our school already had familiarity with Navigate and PSG through the EMS program.

One of your salespeople, Jason Hanson, reached out about coming in and talking to the [Florida Fire Training Directors Association] training directors about what you could offer on the fire side, which is how we became familiar with *Fundamentals of Fire Fighter Skills and Hazardous Materials Response, Fourth Edition (Fundamentals 4E)*. The *Fundamentals 4E* solution had everything we wanted, from the book component to the online component, and it carried over well from class-to-class. Jason helped us get a more in-depth look at the book, and we have used it since.

Continues on next page.

PRODUCTS USED

Fundamentals of Fire Fighter Skills and Hazardous Materials Response, Fourth Edition (Premier Package)

Key Benefits

- ✔ Successfully transitioned their program to a hybrid of online and in-person learning both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic
- ✔ *Fundamentals 4E* book provided a concise, well-laid out training solution for both Firefighter I and II training
- ✔ Enabled students access to plenty of online training materials (eBook, audiobook, Interactive Lectures, etc.) to improve learning ability outside the classroom
- ✔ Reduced average testing time from 90 to 60 minutes using Navigate's online testing solution and gradebook
- ✔ Received top-notch customer service from the PSG team both during and after their transition to using the *Fundamentals 4E* book and Navigate

What do you like about the content within the *Fundamentals 4E* book? Any particularly strong chapters, in your opinion?

I don't think there's really one particularly strong chapter over the others, but the best thing about the book is how it's a "how-to" manual compared to some other textbooks we've used and reviewed. The book is concise, well-laid out, and takes you through the steps and base knowledge needed to teach to the minimum standards we must follow in Florida. The book doesn't add "fluff," which I like a lot. We don't have time for "fluff" with the program schedule we're on.


What do your students like the most about the assets within the Navigate Premier Package for *Fundamentals 4E*?

The Navigate online component is really for the students. Many in this generation live their lives through technology, so being able to get online and use tools like the audiobook, eBook, and more on their own is a nice perk for them. Students seem to like all the components, including the interactive lectures and TestPrep questions, which we use in our program. Ultimately, the students like the ability to access their learning material when and where they want so they can do additional studying at their own pace.

What do you or your colleagues like about Navigate as an instructor?

Prior to using Navigate, we still used paper tests and scantrons. Now, we do all our testing online through the Navigate system. The tests are easy to create and administer online. Overall, we've reduced our testing process from an average of 90 minutes to 60 minutes (1 hour) doing tests this way.

The gradebook in Navigate helps make tracking grades easier, while also providing more transparency into how students are doing on their work within Navigate.



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Have you experienced any improvements in exam scores, pass rates, or retention in your classes since adopting the Fundamentals book?

While it took time to ramp up our familiarity with the book and the Navigate online component, we've had more success in Firefighter I and II pass rates, and overall retention and graduation rates are also up. We used to have a bit of a drop-off in Firefighter I (and to a lesser extent, Firefighter II) pass rates, but that isn't happening anymore as instructors have gotten more comfortable teaching with this solution.

Do you feel Fundamentals 4E helps prepare your students for a career in the fire service both in the classroom and after they join the field?

Yes. Ultimately, the book feels like a good "how-to" manual for teaching minimum standards in the state of Florida for Firefighter I and II. The students can take what they learn in the book to the practical skills training, and it's not a difficult transition.

Around 90% of our students have a job within one year of graduation, and the feedback we've received from Fire Chiefs who have taken in our students has been positive.


From customer service to the support you received in moving to Navigate, how would you rate your overall experience with PSG?

In transitioning to using the *Fundamentals* book and Navigate, the process was mostly seamless. Everyone on the PSG side was great. My team was a little slow in ramping up to the new technology and getting immersed in the system, but that was expected. The system isn't hard to use, but it takes time to teach new technology to firemen! Once the instructors caught on to the system, they love it.

Any time we have issues, customer service has been top-notch. Our students have also had very few problems in getting help from the PSG customer service team when they need it.



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A silhouette of a firefighter wearing a helmet and holding a tool, set against a background of orange and red flames.

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What final words would you like to share for people considering using the Fundamentals book or working with the PSG team?

Many in the industry don't want anything new. We're all comfortable with what we're doing and think what we're doing is always the best, but that's not always true. I would recommend people give the book and Navigate a try. Once we jumped in, we found it's a tremendous asset to both our instructors and our students.

The EMS side of our school also uses PSG materials, so the Navigate system is familiar in our college from EMS all the way through AS Fire Science Degree and Chief Officer programs. It makes a big difference in training, and you'll be surprised how well it can work for your program.

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