

Success Story:

Capital Area Intermediate Unit

Enola, PA

Regional Education Service Agency Successfully Pilots Online Speech Therapy with Online Students



The Challenge

School districts inside the Capital Area Intermediate Unit (CAIU) strive to employ their own speech-language pathologists (SLPs). However, the school districts in the CAIU catchment area — districts in Cumberland, Dauphin, Perry and northern York counties in Pennsylvania — are not immune to issues such as overflowing caseloads, shortages due to leaves of absence and other unforeseeable circumstances that may halt therapy services.

Although the CAIU is centrally located near Harrisburg, PA, some of the districts in its catchment area are more rural, making it difficult to recruit qualified therapists should a vacancy need to be filled.

Choosing PresenceLearning

After researching potential service providers, CAIU decided to pilot PresenceLearning's online speech therapy services with 16 students at Commonwealth Connections Academy, a cyber charter school located within the CAIU's catchment area.

"Students at Commonwealth Connections are already used to and comfortable with online instruction," said Arlene Moll, project administrator of the Student Services Team at CAIU. "Teletherapy was not a huge jump for them."

Commonwealth Connections started using online speech therapy in May, 2014. As of September of the same year, approximately 80 students from the school are using PresenceLearning's services. Moll estimates that this number could expand to about 100 students by the end of the year. And, because of its success with online speech therapy, CAIU is also considering the possibility of offering online occupational therapy and counseling.

Benefits & Outcomes

Although the online speech therapy pilot was initially met with reluctance from one family, their perception of the services changed once they started using it.

"One of the families at Commonwealth Connections that was given the opportunity to participate in the pilot was hesitant to agree to do online speech therapy, and said they

(continued...)

“Once PresenceLearning was on board and started delivering services, not only did the [initially hesitant] family exclusively request online speech therapy, they worked with Commonwealth Connections to increase the level of services for their youngest child from once a month to four times a month.”

Arlene Moll,
Project Administrator of the
Student Services Team at CAIU

PresenceLearning

580 Market Street, Sixth Floor
San Francisco, CA 94104-5417
Phone: 415.512.9000
Toll Free: 877.410.5418
Fax: 415.520.5444
schools@presencelearning.com

would only do it until the end of the school year," said Moll. "Once PresenceLearning was on board and started delivering services, not only did the family exclusively request online speech therapy, they worked with Commonwealth Connections to increase the level of services for their youngest child from once a month to four times a month."

Due to the success of online speech therapy with the students at Commonwealth Connections, CAIU is looking forward to being able to fill gaps in therapist coverage in the other schools it serves with confidence in the quality of the services provided by PresenceLearning. If a therapist takes medical leave, CAIU can now assign his or her caseload to a remote therapist until he or she returns, something CAIU has historically been unable to do. Online therapy is also helpful if a therapist resigns mid-year or if a district owes compensatory time. If a district owes a student compensatory speech time, the district no longer has to double up on therapy during the school day because the student can complete therapy online either before or after school, thus lessening the amount of time a student is being pulled out of class.

CAIU actively shares its successes in online speech therapy with other service agencies in Pennsylvania. The agency is now in discussions with BLaST IU, Berks County IU and Central IU to host cross-contracts for speech services.

PresenceLearning

580 Market Street, Sixth Floor
San Francisco, CA 94104-5417
Phone: 415.512.9000
Toll Free: 877.410.5418
Fax: 415.520.5444
schools@presencelearning.com