

Success Story:

Willows Intermediate School

Glenn County, CA

Blended Learning Model Fills Gap for Speech-Language Pathology Services

The Challenge

Willows Intermediate School serves all middle school students in Willows, California, a town of 6,200 in rural northern California's Glenn County. Constructed in 1976, Willows Intermediate has 22 educators teaching 485 students and is one of four schools comprising the Willow Unified School District. Serving an extremely diverse population and variety of cultures, the school is committed to setting high expectations for all students and being a true school of achievement.

The district is part of the Glenn County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) and is served by the Glenn County Office of Education. Because the county is in a rural setting, finding speech pathologists and other special services providers has been an ongoing challenge. With the nearest providers more than 30 miles away in the town of Chico, the SELPA often struggled to find adequate coverage for their students needing speech-language therapy.

Choosing PresenceLearning

Glenn County Office of Education has been a frontrunner in using distance learning. Since two of their high schools successfully teach Spanish using distance learning, Glenn County Office of Education, in partnership with Willows Unified School District, decided to try that approach for speech therapy. Ms. Vicki Shadd, Director of SELPA/Student Services for Glenn County Office of Education offers insight on the decision, "We wanted to address our need for speech services from a more holistic approach in light of our difficulty in finding therapists, so we decided to test a blended model in which we would employ therapists, pilot telespeech and contract locally with private practices. She continued, "We had the support and systems to try an innovative solution and, after talking with PresenceLearning, we knew that they would be a good fit for us."

"Before launching the program, we established the criteria for participation. A school had to have the technological capacity to pilot the program and we wanted kids above grade three who were already receiving speech therapy, and not in need of multiple modalities of therapies," said Ms. Shadd.

The feedback from students, parents and staff has been positive. Jennifer Wayman, Program Specialist said, "We currently have 13 students using PresenceLearning. Some students work in pairs and others work individually. They log right in and have worked really well with our assigned SLP, Adrian. All of the students really enjoy the sessions."

(continued...)



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**Ms. Vicki Shadd,
Director of SELPA/Student
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Benefits & Outcomes

“PresenceLearning has filled a significant gap in finding speech pathologists,” continues Ms. Shadd. “We are confident that our upcoming IEP meetings will validate our students’ progress,” Ms. Wayman added, “Our assigned SLP is wonderful. She is collaborative and works with us to fit into the school’s existing infrastructure. She even plans to be present via video-conference when we run our day long schedule of IEP meetings in the spring.”

Looking ahead, Ms. Shadd said, “Because of our rural location, we are hoping to have other schools in the district adopt PresenceLearning in the future. PresenceLearning has helped us to fill a void and meet our goals of helping all of our students to reach their greatest potential.”

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