

Success Story:

Medford School District

Southern Oregon

Large District Discovers Telepractice Can Fill Gaps and Prevent Staff Burn-Out

The Challenge

As the largest district in southern Oregon, Medford School District serves 12,727 students at 21 schools. Because of their remote location, Medford found it difficult to find Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs). They decided to investigate a new way to help provide speech-language therapy for their special needs students.

Choosing PresenceLearning

"Several SLPs gave their notice last spring and we couldn't fill their positions," said Ms. Erika Bare, a Teacher on Special Assignment working in the district's administrative offices. "With the nearest graduate-level program for preparing SLPs over 3 hours away at University of Oregon in Eugene, we had few applicants. Southern Oregon is pretty rural and SLPs rarely move to our area unless they are from here. So we were facing a serious gap that needed to be filled."

Around that time, Medford learned about PresenceLearning during a presentation on telepractice at a Southern Oregon Educational Service District (SOESD) Special Education Directors' meeting. "This was my first exposure to telepractice. I did not know it was even an option until it was presented at that meeting," said Ms. Bare.

During the meeting, Medford learned that a neighboring district, Central Point, had begun using PresenceLearning after they were unable to fill an unexpected SLP vacancy. After hearing about what Central Point was doing, Medford visited them to see how the implementation was working. "We were impressed and decided to move forward," said Bare. "We appreciated that it was such an individualized service, providing 1-on-1 or 1-on-2 speech services," Ms. Bare continued, "We were able to see that the technology really works and that the kids using PresenceLearning were responding well. We saw that the activities were engaging and varied throughout the session and that the SLP was able to communicate very effectively with the students, especially with regard to sound production."

Benefits & Outcomes

PresenceLearning started by providing services to eight schools in the district and has since grown to serve 12 schools; four elementary schools, two charter schools, two middle schools, three high schools and an alternative high school. Medford also uses PresenceLearning to serve special needs students attending private schools in the district's service area.

(continued...)



District Profile:

Medford School District 549c
Medford, Oregon

<http://www.medford.k12.or.us/>

- Over 12,000 K-12 students
- 22 schools: 14 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 4 high schools and 2 public charter schools

Medford School District 549C Mission Statement:

"We are a high quality teaching and learning organization dedicated to preparing all students to graduate with a sound educational foundation, ready to succeed in post-secondary education, and to be contributing community members."

"It's a great service. It can absolutely work and we've seen great results. Students definitely make progress and it has lightened the loads for on-site SLPs. I wouldn't hesitate to say it is highly recommended."

Ms. Erika Bare,
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"It's very effective and students are making good progress. The kids like it and are very engaged with the technology, especially at the elementary level. We recently reviewed progress reports for around 300 students receiving PresenceLearning services and the vast majority were making adequate progress."

Now with more than half of the schools in the district utilizing PresenceLearning, Medford looks forward to next year. "We have been able to lighten our own SLP's loads and form a team focused on assessments and evaluations," said Ms. Bare. "They make sure the evaluation process is done well and that evaluations are consistent across the district. They really complement the PresenceLearning team. Our vision is to incorporate this hybrid model at all of our schools, involving our on-staff SLPs more directly in determining which students are the best candidates for PresenceLearning."

Ms. Bare concludes, "It's a great service. It can absolutely work and we've seen great results. Students definitely make progress and it has lightened the loads for on-site SLPs. I wouldn't hesitate to say it is highly recommended."

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