

Success Story:

Fowler Unified School District

Fowler and Malaga, CA

Rural California School District Makes Major Strides Using Online Speech Therapy

Getting Started with Online Speech Therapy

Fowler Unified School District (USD), a rural district in California's San Joaquin Valley, was experiencing issues hiring a speech language pathologist (SLP). Due to tight budgets, Fowler USD was unable to offer an SLP the salary available from neighboring districts. The result: no applicants for the district's SLP vacancy during the 2011-2012 school year. To ensure compliance with legal mandates to provide services for students with special needs, Fowler partnered with PresenceLearning to implement online speech therapy during the 2012-2013 school year.

Assisted by an onsite speech aid, PresenceLearning began providing online speech therapy sessions on "speech day" at each of the district's six schools. The district received great feedback from both students and their parents who were able to log-in and watch their students' sessions and view their progress.

"During the 2012-2013 school year, our district had 110 students using PresenceLearning. It worked so well that we were able to dismiss 57 of those students in just one year," said Dustine Borges, chief psychologist and director of Special Education for Fowler USD. "Now we are adding students to the service at about the same rate that we are exiting them, keeping caseloads balanced."

PresenceLearning provided online assessments to many of those students, breaking the log-jam that many districts experience because it can be so time-consuming to perform these required evaluations.

New Challenges

As the school year progressed, Fowler USD encountered new challenges to the district's goal of providing adequate services.

First, Fowler USD enrolled a new preschool student with apraxia, a rare "low incidence" speech disorder.

Next, Fowler USD realized that they needed additional help with another key initiative: a district-wide Response to Intervention (RtI) program focused on resolving learning issues early and, if possible, preventing students from needing special education. Fowler USD's RtI program, which also includes a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) program, began to overwhelm the district's limited resources and available expertise.

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District Profile: Fowler Unified School District Fresno County, CA

Fowler Unified School District provides high quality educational and co-curricular experiences to students to make them college- and career-ready. Fowler's six school sites serve approximately 2,325 students in grades K-12 in communities near Fresno in California's Central Valley.

"Our students' parents love PresenceLearning. Surrounding school districts visit just to watch the services. We saw fabulous results almost immediately and are proud of our renewed special education program."

Dustine Borges,
Chief Psychologist and Director
of Special Education

PresenceLearning

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Benefits & Outcomes

Just as it helped fill Fowler USD's unfilled opening for an SLP, PresenceLearning was able to aid the district with its new obstacles.

Using PresenceLearning's vast network of more than 400 clinicians, Fowler USD was able to connect their pre-K student with apraxia with a leading expert who was located across the country. With one-on-one online speech therapy, the student has made significant progress, something that may not have been possible without using technology to eliminate the barriers of time and distance.

Bolstered by PresenceLearning's specially trained online SLPs, Fowler USD has successfully implemented its RtI initiative, reaching students earlier with intensive interventions and preventing harder to correct problems as students get older.

The online speech therapy program has been a success enabling the district's speech therapy caseload to become manageable and remain balanced.

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