

Success Story:

Union County School System

Blairsville, GA

Remote School District Implements Live Online Speech Therapy to Provide Quality Service and Reduce Overall Costs

The Challenge

Stunning mountain vistas, thick green forests and rushing streams provide the backdrop for the Union County School System in northern Georgia. The district currently serves 2,700 K-12 students, including approximately 350 special needs students with individualized education programs (IEPs). While a vacationer's paradise, Union County's location makes it difficult to find quality service providers for the district's special needs population.

The district's speech-language pathologists (SLPs) had to drive long distances between schools, making very long days for the SLPs and adding expense for the district. Like many districts nationwide, Union County has a chronic SLP shortage resulting in overflowing caseloads for the district's SLPs.

Research published by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) indicates that large caseloads, like those in Union County, negatively affect student outcomes and contribute toward high rates of SLP attrition. In order to deliver speech therapy to its students more efficiently, and to lower the district's costs of providing speech therapy, it began to look for innovative solutions.

Choosing PresenceLearning

In Spring 2012, Union County was introduced to PresenceLearning. Intrigued about what online speech therapy could do to fix their SLP shortage and lower their overall costs, the district started a trial period in May 2012. A total of ten students—mostly elementary school students, but some middle and high school students as well—participated in the therapy trial. The elementary school students were from Woody Gap Elementary, one of the district's most rural schools.

Kristy Chapman, special education director of the Union County Board of Education, said that the feedback from students, parents, SLPs and district staff was positive. Said Chapman, "Students have liked the one-to-one attention and the interaction they get."

After a successful pilot, Union County is now using PresenceLearning's live online speech therapy as the primary therapy service for a select group of students.

(continued...)



"PresenceLearning allows us to serve a portion of our students with special needs without having to overload our SLPs."

Kristy Chapman,
Special Education Director
of the Union County
Board of Education

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

Benefits & Outcomes

PresenceLearning proved to be a valuable supplemental resource for Union County. The online speech therapy option for some students not only complements the work of the district SLPs, but it lessens their caseloads and travel time. “Given our rural location, the virtual access to SLPs, in addition to the ease-of-use of the service, makes PresenceLearning a great fit for our district,” said Chapman.

The online therapy services are not only efficient, but they have proven to be effective. Some students using PresenceLearning have tested out of speech therapy—always a happy outcome whenever and wherever possible. Other students have improved enough to no longer need individual sessions and are being paired with another student for their sessions. Online therapy works well for one-on-one sessions as well as small group sessions.

“PresenceLearning allows us to serve a portion of our students with special needs without having to overload our SLPs,” said Chapman. “We would love to expand our district’s use of PresenceLearning to more students in the future.”

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