

Success Story:

Rocky Mount Preparatory School

Rocky Mount, NC

Public Charter School Successfully Uses Online Speech Therapy as Part of Blended Learning Initiative

The Challenge

Priding itself on its innovative education and business practices, Rocky Mount Prep in Rocky Mount, NC, strives to teach students “knowledge, leadership and character” to “develop well-rounded, successful citizens.” Serving 1,236 students in grades K-12, the tuition-free public charter school has, for the last two years, been using methodology based on Rocketship Elementary and Carpe Diem High School’s blended learning models. The daily instruction model allows students from kindergarten to 12th grade to spend part of their day completing assignments and researching subject areas on the computer which is blended with classroom instruction.

However, Rocky Mount Prep’s program was not always so cutting edge. Prior to implementing their highly praised blended learning model, its special education department was experiencing technical difficulties. The school’s not-so urban area, accompanied by a local shortage of speech-language pathologists, resulted in inconsistent therapy sessions, leaving parents concerned that their children were not getting the help they needed.

“We had several SLPs that were driving up to an hour and a half to serve our students,” said Doug Haynes, chief executive officer of Rocky Mount Prep. “There were some times they could not make the drive so kids were not getting consistent therapy.”

Choosing PresenceLearning

Prior to his position at Rocky Mount Prep, Haynes had been studying online instruction and tutoring for several years. When he found PresenceLearning in an online search for online therapy, he thought this could be of great use to students.

“I found PresenceLearning when they were just starting out,” said Haynes. “When I got my job at Rocky Mount, I saw that we were having difficulties with the speech program. Since we were moving into blended learning, I knew to contact PresenceLearning because they were an emerging leader in the field.”

In 2012, Rocky Mount implemented PresenceLearning’s online speech therapy with around 30 students.

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Rocky Mount Prep Profile:

Rocky Mount Prep is a free, open-enrollment, college preparatory public charter school in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, with a diverse body of approximately 1,200 elementary, middle and high school students. More than 60 percent of Rocky Mount students are eligible for free-and-reduced lunch.

Rocky Mount uses an innovative “hybrid” school design that personalizes learning to each student’s needs through blended learning. They combine the best of face-to-face instruction using highly trained teachers with the best of online learning methods using adaptive software. Rocky Mount has a strong record of sending its graduates to college.

“We have received very positive feedback on the quality of therapy, the amount of student improvement and the amount of information to which parents have access.”

**Doug Haynes,
Chief Executive Officer
of Rocky Mount Prep**

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

Rocky Mount Prep is now using online speech therapy with nearly 50 students, mostly in grades K-5 and some in middle school. PresenceLearning's online SLPs conduct evaluations, deliver therapy sessions and complete documentation for each speech therapy case, allowing students to receive consistent, high quality therapy and for Rocky Mount to stay in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

"We have received very positive feedback on the quality of therapy, the amount of student improvement and the amount of information to which parents have access," said Haynes. "Initially, parents were skeptical about teletherapy, but we asked parents to give it a chance and it has paid off." With PresenceLearning, Rocky Mount Prep has been able to include special education in their blended learning approach and serve all of their students better.

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