Success Story
Burlington Area School District

BURLINGTON, WISCONSIN

Personalized Learning Improves NWEA™ Exam Scores

Burlington Area School District in Burlington, Wisconsin has been differentiating learning for every student from K–12 since 2011. During that time, they’ve seen incredible gains on NWEA™ exams, which they attribute, in large part, to personalized learning.

DIFFERENTIATING FOR A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

Burlington Area School District has 3,100 students across seven schools throughout the district. With a diverse population in their classrooms, district administrators were looking for a way to target the specific needs of each student. Assistant Superintendent Connie Zinnen explains that her district’s goal was to differentiate instruction at tier one for all grades K–12. So, Burlington turned to Edgenuity and began using Pathblazer® to personalize learning with targeted intervention. “We personalized learning before it was a buzzword, and Edgenuity has primarily helped us do that,” Zinnen said. “This tool actually helped us do it in a systematic way.”

In 2011, Burlington fully implemented personalized learning for all their students and by 2013, they were seeing quantifiable results. They identified a direct correlation between NWEA™ test scores, and the amount of time students were spending in the system. Administrators then used that information to build a schedule that allowed students sufficient time to work on Pathblazer throughout their week. For grades K–8, administrators suggested a minimum of one hour of math and one hour of reading each week. Teachers could use the system more as needed, and with Burlington’s 1:1 implementation, educators could integrate the system into their teaching without scheduling a computer lab.
Zinnen says that it was a relief for teachers to know there was a good tool challenging higher level students while remediating students who needed more work rebuilding foundational skills. “The system provides good feedback and helps with goalsetting,” Zinnen said. “We can target particular areas so teachers can assign additional practice if students need it. Kids do well in it, and we think it’s made a difference.”

TRACKING STUDENT SUCCESS

Burlington Area School District uses MAP® Growth™ to track and measure school improvement over time. “We had a lot of scores below the national mean, so we want to be better than that,” Zinnen said. “Edgenuity contributed to that improvement.” From the spring of 2013 through 2016, Burlington’s NWEA™ test scores have shown a remarkable rise. And since the spring of 2015, nearly all students in grades K–8 have been above the national average in each semester. Now that their test scores are consistently eclipsing the national average, Zinnen and her colleagues are intent on continuing to challenge students. “We’re really challenging ourselves to see growth, and we’re happy with our results,” Zinnen said. “We believe our commitment to Edgenuity has helped with these numbers.”

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THE ADVANTAGE OF TARGETED INTERVENTION

Devising a district-wide solution and giving teachers the support and resources they need has been vital to the success of Burlington’s personalized learning program. “We wanted to find a tool that made [instruction] consistent no matter what school you went to,” Zinnen said, while still addressing all tiers of RTI (Response to Intervention) framework.

The integration with NWEA™ and Renaissance Star Assessments® has also given students an edge when test time rolls around. “Another benefit is that [Edgenuity] replicates the state assessment, so students are at an advantage because they are already familiar with the style and format of questions on these high-stakes assessments,” Zinnen said. “Our teachers liked that and felt as though it gave kids an advantage.”

Through a strong program of personalized learning, Burlington Area School District is using targeted intervention to increase NWEA™ test scores. The flexibility of the program and supplemental support, ensures that every student can close learning gaps, strengthen foundational skills, and achieve real student success on standardized exams and beyond.