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Harnessing Data to Inform and Improve

How the Twin Rivers Unified District is Identifying Gaps in Student Learning

Uve Dahmen faced two challenges: how to identify students likely to fall short of "Proficient" on the state assessment and what to do to improve those students' command of instructional content.

The Challenge.

Identify students likely to underperform on the state assessment and remediate instruction to increase the number of kids who perform at the "Proficient" level or better.

Dahmen, director of assessment and accountability for the Twin Rivers Unified School District in Sacramento, chose a new approach that incorporates the Measured Progress DATAWISE™ assessment and data management platform. Twin Rivers uses DATAWISE to test students and group them according to their specific skills and content knowledge needs. Specifically, DATAWISE is used to create assessments and to analyze and share student results. Teachers can use the data to identify which standards cause difficulty for their students, so they can target appropriate interventions.

While each school and district is unique in many ways, Twin Rivers' challenges and demographics parallel many other school departments across the nation. The district, which serves a diverse population of 28,000 students, was seeking ways to improve student performance. Twin Rivers chose to focus initially on students who scored between the midpoint of the "Basic" level and just below "Proficient"—an average of roughly 16 percent of the district's students.

Under Dahmen's direction, Twin Rivers can create benchmark assessments to project how students are likely to perform on state summative tests. According to Dahmen, by scaling the district's tests on the same continuum as the state accountability assessments, educators can use students' scaled scores on the district assessments to predict their performance on state tests.

The Solution.

Assess students on the Measured Progress DATAWISE platform and use the resulting data to pinpoint which standards pose the greatest challenge; adjust instruction accordingly.

The Results.

By identifying parts of the curriculum that require shifts in instruction, Twin Rivers is putting teachers and students on the road to improved performance.

In addition, Twin Rivers benefits from the easy-to-read reports the DATAWISE platform generates. Teachers can view the reports on their personalized dashboards. Under Dahmen's guidance, learning coaches work with teachers to develop the skills needed to effectively inform instruction.

"The purpose is to bring out the formative nature of summative assessment," says Dahmen. "What I am trying to do is get teachers to look forward—not just backward—and see where they affect students now to increase learning and success on our state exams," he says. "This significantly shifts thinking about how benchmark assessments can be used."

Evidence of Success.

- Attracting and keeping new students – out-of-district transfers are down more than 50 percent thanks to parents and students choosing Twin Rivers schools.
- Graduation rates are up nearly 10 percent.
- The district is seeing gains in almost every area of the District Academic Performance Index (API).
- The achievement gap is narrowing every year, while the achievement levels of all students are rising.
- 38 percent more Twin Rivers students are receiving early college credit through Advanced Placement courses.
- Fewer students are missing school – suspensions are down 27 percent and expulsions are down 45 percent.
- The number of schools passing the state academic goal of 800 API has doubled.

TwinRivers
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Profile:

Twin Rivers serves a 45-square-mile area in Sacramento County; the most populous areas are North Sacramento, North Highlands, and Rio Linda. Other statistics include:

- 1,500 teachers
- 28,000 students
- 50 schools
- 46 languages
- 40 percent English language learners
- 81 percent of students receive free or reduced lunch

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