

Haverhill Elementary, Southwest Allen County Ft. Wayne, Indiana

Profile

Haverhill Elementary, a high-performing Indiana four-star school, is part of the Southwest Allen County School District. Located in Fort Wayne, Haverhill Elementary is one of six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school in the district and currently serves approximately 450 students in grades K-5.

“We went from months to seconds in our ability to analyze school-wide performance data. Pearson Inform not only helps measure the effectiveness of current instruction, but also guides improvement strategies where they are needed most.”

- Debra Miller, principal, Haverhill Elementary
Southwest Allen County School District

A century-old one-room schoolhouse is a constant reminder to residents in Aboite and Lafayette Townships that a quality education has long been a tradition in Southwest Allen County. According to the Indiana Department of Education, in 2001-2002 Southwest Allen County Schools ranked fifth in the state for percentage of students above average in math, English and language arts standards. The school system also ranked seventh in SAT scores (composite), eighth in ISTEP scores (total battery), and 10th in the Cognitive Skills Index for that school year.

Southwest Allen County School District is also ranked within the top 17 percent of schools in the nation according to a research study conducted by Penton Publication's Expansion Management magazine. The study included all high school degree-granting secondary school districts in the United States that have an enrollment of at least 3,300 students. There were over 2,800 school districts used in this study.

Challenge

Every three years all Indiana public schools are required to present a long-range plan for school improvement. The goals must be substantiated by assessments, including the state assessment, ISTEP+ (Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress – Plus), as well as a secondary assessment. This data must be collected and then compared against at least three additional sources of data taken from national, state, local, building, or grade-level tests.

Like all schools in Southwest Allen County School District, Haverhill Elementary's administrators and teachers spent countless hours before and after school pouring over reams of data to extract and identify school-wide, grade level and individual student performance trends – information that needed to be included in the long-range state reports as well as the specific district-level yearly accounts.

“The benefits of school improvement was lost in the task, as it was so arduous to undertake and done completely by hand,” said Debra Miller, principal at Haverhill Elementary.

At the same time, Dr. Brian Smith, superintendent for Southwest Allen County School District and chairperson for the Indiana DOE task force on data-mining issues, understood that school leaders across his region were being charged to make operational and curricular decisions to improve educational achievement and fulfill No Child Left Behind requirements.

However, none of that could be accomplished if his administrators and teachers were buried underneath volumes of charts, graphs, and reports. Dr. Smith decided the district needed a sophisticated data analysis system that would not only help administrators and teachers analyze assessment and performance data, but guide instructional decisions and help increase student outcomes.

They decided on Pearson School System’s Pearson Inform achievement analysis and decision support system.

Implementation

The implementation of Pearson Inform began at Haverhill Elementary in early 2005 and continues at the other eight schools in the district. And while Principal Miller was excited at the prospect of leaving behind the days of aggregating and disaggregating information by hand, she was also apprehensive about how her staff would accept it.

“With 25 years of experience as an educator and 13 years as a building administrator, I know one thing for sure: For any new technology or teaching product to be embraced by teachers, it must be free of uncomplicated applications and easy to integrate into their daily routines,” said Miller. “Teachers want to do what they love best – and that’s teaching. They don’t want to devote their precious time being trained on a new product that won’t directly affect instruction. New technology has to manifest real significance in daily instruction – or they collectively will not buy in.”

Superintendent Smith added, “We needed to adopt a solution that allowed us to manage the enterprise data into a cohesive body of information with a common look and feel, which could quickly and easily provide higher quality information. Our goal was to enhance our agility by giving teachers the information they needed, when they needed it, to affect real change in improving student performance.”

Miller’s concerns were put to rest in the first three hours of using Pearson Inform.

“Our trainer had a hard time holding us back – we were like kids in a candy store,” said Miller. “We were fully operational in just over three hours. We went from months to seconds in being able to develop queries and save reports that detail individual testing scores. We could look at big picture classroom performance outcomes and use that information to prioritize intervention and improvement strategies with just a few key strokes.”

Results

Recently, Miller and one of her teachers were perplexed about how one of their students could pass a secondary assessment test in mathematics one week and fail the I-STEP assessment test the next week.

The student had a diagnosed learning disability in reading; however, the teaching staff had been observing steady progress in her math skills. They were anxious to understand the drastic differences.

Using Pearson Inform, they were quickly able to identify the cause of the inconsistency on the tests and prescribe a solution. They determined that the reading disability presented numerous problems for the child on the paper and pencil version of the math test while the computer-based assessment was easier for her to use.

“Before we had Pearson Inform, this process would have taken us into the next school year before we diagnosed the problem and developed a prescriptive measure to improve this student’s individual outcome on required tests,” said Miller.

She added, “The results speak for themselves. Here at Haverhill we have experienced nothing short of a revolution in how we do everything, from gathering data to assessing performance to delivering instruction.”