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North Carolina School District Uses the Power of Prosper to Shape Instruction, Improve Student Achievement

Students at Kimberley Park Elementary in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools – some barely old enough to tie their own shoes – are reviewing performance data with their teachers, setting goals and devising strategies to achieve. And it's paying off, with state proficiency scores on the rise at an unprecedented rate: 40 percent over a five-year period.

With a free/reduced lunch population of 95 percent, this small, primarily African-American school in downtown Winston-Salem, N.C., has seen tremendous improvement since Principal Shelia Gorham began her tenure five years ago. When she arrived, the students scored at 49 percent proficiency on state tests, and they are now at nearly 90 percent. She attributes her students' success to the school's focused instruction based on data from frequent testing – something they are doing with the help of Prosper™ assessment system, a formative assessment tool from Pearson Assessments.

Data Showing the Way

"Each child has a sense that 'this is about me, and it's up to me,'" said Gorham. "Our students see how they're performing, and they feel empowered to achieve."

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Prosper combines scanning technology with PC processing and data analysis to automate testing. It can be used to generate tests that target specific learning objectives, to create tests from a test-item bank or to

create custom questions covered in class. Data is available in real time, and reports show detailed results that might otherwise only be available on district- or state-level assessments or national certification exams.

"You have to know where children are to see where they need to go," said Gorham. "We don't just want to say 'let's teach this.' Our primary goal is to see that our instruction is focused and ensure our children are mastering what is taught."

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Kimberley Park Elementary began running quarterly tests when Gorham came aboard, but until its recent implementation of Prosper, it was a time-consuming process. Each teacher would spend about two hours to disaggregate the data from each test. "Now, it's right there for them," said Gorham. "Our teachers are extremely elated because it frees up time for more important things."

Changing Instruction Systemwide

Prosper is being used throughout Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, one of the largest districts in the state, serving 50,400 students at 72 schools. Across this diverse district, about half the students are Caucasian, a third are African-American, 14 percent are Hispanic and three percent are other races. Forty-seven percent of the district's students are on the free/reduced lunch program, and student turnover is high. Now growing at the rate of 1,000 to 1,200 students per year, with an increasing population of students who are not native English-speaking, it's critical that teachers have efficient ways to track student progress.

"Prosper gives a prescription to fix areas that need help," Leiphart said. "And, it gives teachers a chance to help the kids who are the neediest."

Wes Leiphart, the district's assessment manager, said requests for Prosper reports are coming in at a rapid pace, and his department has run 3,700 reports so far this quarter. "I received three calls this week from our curriculum coordinators saying how popular they are because the Prosper reports are so easy to read," he said. "With the quality of reports, we don't have to spend any time teaching people how to read them."

The range of types of reports is very broad, said Leiphart. "We can run results by individual teachers, by grade level, by teams – we have a variety of ways. We can take it down to all the teachers at every grade level, do item analyses every quarter, every year, to track and narrow gaps."

Teachers are able to see frequently missed questions on tests so they can focus instruction in those areas – as well as revise subsequent tests to the desired level of difficulty. "Prosper gives a prescription to fix areas that

the **Power** *of* **Prosper**

need help," he said. "And, it gives teachers a chance to help the kids who are the neediest," he said, referring to the district's many Equity Plus schools, which serve large free/reduced lunch populations.

Leiphart appreciates the convenience of having the test keys built into Prosper, so they don't have to be scanned. Many of the reports give an overall score for the class, as well as a breakdown of how students performed in each goal and objective. "You can see a very clear picture of where the students' strengths and weaknesses are," he said.

Another feature Leiphart finds valuable is the ability to edit student rosters from quarter to quarter, which would otherwise be an unwieldy task with the district's high student turnover.

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools began Prosper implementation for grades 3 through 8, with several high school courses to be added next school year. When choosing Prosper, Leiphart said he was concerned about

taking on a new system, and "we had so much anxiety about it," he said. "Within two weeks, we were so comfortable with it that we were taking shortcuts. There are a lot of checks and balances with Prosper, and it doesn't really let you make mistakes."

Perhaps the greatest benefit of Prosper is the service that comes with it, said Leiphart. "There are a lot of products out there on the market, but you'd never find the level of service that Pearson offers," he said. "The support people have been right on the money and have never left us in a bind. I depend on them and trust them, and that makes all the difference."

Reaping the Benefits

Leiphart said since the district has implemented quarterly tests, it has exceeded state growth in every category of the Adequate Yearly Progress measures of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. "We're close to doubling what the state has done in every category," he said "I think we're going to see gains like we've never seen before."

Gorham, of Kimberley Park Elementary, said, "The data allows us to zero in on what's working and what's not. We get very detailed

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information back, comparing this skill versus another skill. We're making the data alive so our teachers and students know what to do from this point forward."

Contact us to learn how Prosper can help shape instruction and improve student achievement. 800-447-3269 PearsonAssessments.com/prosper