



Top-Down Odyssey Implementation Delivers Promising Results

Superintendent's Data-Driven Approach Leads to Excellent Initial Success Dorchester School District Two, Summerville, South Carolina

Dorchester School District Two in Summerville, South Carolina, is a big district. Comprised of 11 elementary schools and 6 middle schools — the largest of which educates more than 1,000 students — the district faces an extra challenge when implementing new processes. In order to drive change, administrators must plan ahead and communicate clearly and often with all of the hundreds of teachers in the district. So when Dorchester Two Superintendent Joseph Pye decided that an educational software solution would play a role in the district's 2007–2008 improvement strategy, he knew he would have to conduct thorough research and initiate a plan that put every educator on the same page.

The first thing district administrators did was identify their parameters: they wanted software that enabled teachers to differentiate instruction, was aligned to South Carolina state standards, and integrated the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test results

seamlessly into the management system. "CompassLearning was head and shoulders the favorite of the teachers and administrators. They were very adaptable," says Wade Flinner, instructional technology interventionist for the district. CompassLearning's professional development personnel worked with administrators and engineers to make sure the server-based solution ran flawlessly on the district's computers.

Choosing Odyssey as the district's educational software was only the first step. The next step was implementing it in Dorchester Two's 17 elementary and middle schools. That's where Superintendent Pye's conviction that it was the right solution paid off. Says Flinner, "This was a top-level decision from the superintendent, who mandated that all third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students would go through the CompassLearning labs for 40 minutes a day, Monday through Friday. They'd do 20 minutes on reading/language arts and 20 minutes on math." At first, teachers balked; nobody liked the

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idea of giving up their students for almost an hour each day. “But it was an expectation that was pretty much set in stone,” says Flinner. In response to its research, the district also installed tables in each computer lab, where a teacher could confer one-on-one or with a few students whom the MAP tests and Odyssey management system had identified as needing help in a specific area. Flinner continues, “It let teachers give their students undivided attention on the elements they were working on that day.”

If teachers had initial misgivings, those uncertainties subsided when they saw how the Odyssey management system used results from the district’s fall, winter, and spring MAP testing to create personalized learning paths for each student. The system analyzed the MAP scores and automatically identified students’ areas of strength and weakness, enabling teachers to focus on what each student needed. Then it created individualized learning paths of activities that covered the topics each student needed most.

Any lingering doubts vanished when teachers started seeing results — in the form of data — on the spring MAP test. In one school, 87% of students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades saw a substantial test score increase from fall to spring testing. Some of the most remarkable results have come from the district’s special education classes. In one class, the number of students who reached their annual growth goals in reading increased 50% — from 16% to 66% — and in math that number improved from 33% to 68%. According to Dr. Glenn Huggins, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, teachers are seeing improvement outside of MAP testing as well. “They’re seeing marked results on their own assessments in their classrooms. One teacher told me that 50% of her students failed a particular quiz the previous year, and this year, after they went over it in Compass, she had a 100% success rate,” Huggins says.

Huggins and Flinner are quick to point out that the success the district is seeing is the result of several initiatives, from implementing Odyssey to conducting pullouts in class based on MAP results. But the source of these successful initiatives can be traced to Superintendent Pye, whose commitment to planning these solutions and using them to their full potential has filtered down to the classroom teachers, who deserve an enormous amount of credit as well. “We’re giving teachers a lot more ownership over the decision-making process and over the teaching that’s going on in their classroom,”

says Huggins. Flinner agrees: “The teachers, first of all, helped choose it. Second of all, they get to use the data to drive their instruction; they have some latitude in that.” Huggins notes that the sense of responsibility is also translating to the students because they now have a visible list of specific goals that they work toward and look forward to mastering.

Flinner stresses that capturing and analyzing accurate and complete data is essential to identifying how well Odyssey is working in their district. “Our superintendent and assistant superintendent are very strong with data, and they pass that on to their principals. We’re a very data-driven district, all

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the way down to the teachers, who look at their data — even by individual standard — and address what they need to address.” The management and reporting features in CompassLearning Odyssey make tracking and aggregating data much faster and more accurate than traditional ways of recording student performance. Educators can customize reports to reflect trends in a district, school, classroom, or individual student. Each time a student completes a lesson or takes a quiz in Odyssey, the management system automatically adds that score to the student’s record, including what the student has mastered and has not. The outcome is solid, reliable data that can drive educational decision making for the future.

The future of the Dorchester Two school district is bright. Huggins and Flinner report that they’re scheduling training sessions to deepen educators’ familiarity with the broad functionality of the Odyssey system. The district is also considering implementing Odyssey in more grades and subject areas. But it’s clear that Odyssey will play a role in the district’s continued success. Assistant Superintendent Huggins concludes, “At our last teacher liaison, without fail, every school that uses Compass thanked the superintendent for standing behind it.”

CompassLearning is a leader in facilitating student success by collaborating with educators to create personalized learning experiences. Our innovative educational software solutions individualize instruction for each student based on his or her unique needs. Odyssey, our core product, influences student success because it is based on current and confirmed research about how students engage, think, and learn. Teachers and administrators benefit from our custom implementation, professional development, and customer support solutions.

