

A 3,000-student independent school district on the outskirts of Oklahoma, Western Heights Public Schools has a diverse population, with almost 70 percent of students qualifying for the free or reduced-price lunch program. Ten years ago, the district embraced technology to support teaching and learning. Now, with the implementation of two complementary web-based assessment solutions from Scantron, teachers are better able to identify student needs, fine-tune instruction, and monitor results.

Pinpointing Students' Academic Needs

Even before the progress and reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, administrators in Western Heights Public Schools understood the importance of using technology for teaching and learning. "We have long held that aligning under one umbrella all aspects of the curriculum—prediction and analysis of student assessment with the appropriate delivery of instruction—would produce a much more effective school improvement process," says district superintendent Joe Kitchens.

Combining Achievement Series and Performance Series

"We are using multiple assessments to target which students are likely to have problems with passing NCLB-driven assessments and graduation tests," says Kitchens. "We currently use the Scantron Performance Series solution and the Stanford 9 test to screen students and predict (with a 95 percent confidence level) which ones are likely to have problems performing at an acceptable level." Once the district identifies students through an initial screening, it uses benchmark tests, created in Scantron's Achievement Series solution, to identify the specific state standards for which remediation is required and to monitor results. "We actually get this data back from Scantron immediately," he says. "Then the specific data for individual students is securely distributed to their teachers—in near real time and in a prioritized fashion."

Combining Predictive and Benchmark Data

The district creates a single report that combines the predictive data from Performance Series with the directed remediation and benchmark results from Achievement Series. "The ability to predict overall student performance initially gives us an excellent opportunity to identify which students need assistance," says Kitchens. "Combining the predictive information from Performance Series with results from quarterly benchmark assessment in Achievement Series helps us delineate which standards are giving students the most problems, thus directing targeted as well as prioritized remediation."





Having a predictive capability enables the district to avoid surprises when the NCLB scores are reported, says Kitchens. "Since we can use Performance Series to accurately predict the performance of each student on NCLB assessments, we can also predict the Academic Yearly Progress (AYP) of subgroups, grade levels, and actual sites. We know the formulas and can make very accurate AYP predictions for the site well in advance of the state test."

Maintaining an ongoing cycle of assessment and feedback provides useful data to students as well as teachers.

"We are linking students' grades to their performance on the benchmark assessments created in Achievement Series," says Kitchens. "Forty percent of each student's actual grade is based on the benchmark assessment. I think we face real danger when we don't have a positive correlation between grades and state test performance."

In a move toward using electronic portfolios, the Western Heights Public Schools district—working in cooperation with the North Central Association—has instituted a credentialing model that also makes use of students' assessment scores.

"Students who score at the 50 percent level or greater on Performance Series, Stanford 9, or ACT receive credentials in that specific area," says Kitchens. "For instance, a student scoring at the 60th percentile on Performance Series in math is credentialed in math for that year." To make the grading process more transparent and meaningful, students' grade cards show their traditional grades, their credentials on all assessments, and their prioritized performance on all benchmark assessments. "Achievement Series data and Performance Series data are acquired automatically in this process," he says.

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Joe Kitchens
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