Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana, "Moves the Needle" on Student Progress

Using Scantron® Assessment Solutions and Services

In a world of changing educational standards, expanding technology, and evolving accountability measures, Calcasieu Parish gains a sense of peace and stability by focusing on bringing their teams together, examining what they have, and celebrating their successes.

Calcasieu Parish Public Schools comprises 61 schools, serving more than 33,000 students at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Calcasieu characteristics include:

- **Fifth-largest school district in Louisiana**
- **Scores on critical state and college measures such as LEAP, ACT, and Advanced Placement all above state average**
- **Many schools are dealing with recent influx of non-English speakers**
- **Wide range of school performance against district and national goals**

Since 1903, Calcasieu Parish Public Schools have been educating students and rising to the challenges of an ever-changing educational environment.

Yesterday...

In 2006, Calcasieu was looking for a change. They needed a technology solution with enough flexibility to support both high- and low-performing schools and meet several specific classroom criteria:

- **Provide teachers with insight into student performance from the first day of school.**
- **Supply a method for teachers to develop and deliver formative assessments.**
- **Help teachers support special student populations.**

They lacked the technology to view the whole student, and knew that any solution had to provide depth (longitudinal results) as well as breadth (coverage for multiple subjects).

After a cross-disciplinary team spent a year researching and evaluating options, they identified a solution that enabled standards-based assessment, formative assessment, and computer-adaptive diagnostic assessment.

Enter Scantron Assessment Solutions.

Today...

Educators can access a single data set to view student progress—not only a snapshot of today's results, but historical information for as long as the student has been in the district.

"It's one thing to say, okay, this is how the child is doing now, but when you look at a seventh grader, and you... look at his history all the way back to kindergarten all in one spreadsheet...that is so empowering," says Supervisor of Assessment Dr. Marylou Caldarera.

This kind of empowerment results in two nationally recognized high-performing, high-poverty schools, and state recognition of the district's excellent administrators. And it results in student growth: "We've had increases in student achievement in growth over time that we're quite proud of," states Chief Technology Officer Sheryl Abshire.

"If I could have only one assessment tool to replace everything else I've ever worked with, it would be the Performance Series."

Dr. Marylou Caldarera
Supervisor of Assessment, Calcasieu Parish Public Schools

In addition to the normed and reliable diagnostic testing in Scantron's computer-adaptive growth assessment, the Scantron solution provides item management and test delivery for purchased and teacher-created fixed-form assessments. This balanced solution delivers items aligned to and even expressly written for the Common Core State Standards.

"With the advent of the new Common Core assessments, I think that's driving our progress more quickly," says Abshire. Strong and rapid progress depends on strong data to inform good decision making. Caldarera agrees. "[Scantron] writes our benchmark tests, our blueprints, and they remarkably match with how a child does on the state test."

Calcasieu attributes the success of their assessment program to their long history of providing professional development to their educators around both administering tests *and* understanding and using the data effectively, as well.

Abshire says, "We have spent many years and a great deal of time in building capacity in our district leaders to understand the importance of...assessment, and to understand that without a target, it's difficult to ascertain where you need to go."

Caldarera adds, "Performance Series fulfills our superintendent's criteria to show where a student is and [provides] a map for the next steps. If I'm a parent or a teacher, I can see a student is making progress and that the gap is closing."

Achievement results displayed in clear, understandable reports help students directly in many ways. Abshire further notes, "I've seen children actually being able to articulate how they've done on these standards, and voice it not only to their teacher, but also to their peers and to their parents." Caldarera adds, "It just really moves you to see these children understanding and explaining to their parents their data and telling them why and what they need to do now to get better."

Tomorrow...

The educational environment is always evolving. State tests add and change items, new standards are developed, and new tests and methods of measuring students constantly arise. But Calcasieu is ready.

"People tend to think, well we've got to scrap everything we already have, and you really don't. Because it's been going on for a long time now, teaching the children and looking at what their strengths and weaknesses are. And when you realize that you have what you need right now to move forward every day, it gives you a sense of peace," asserts Caldarera. "That's why we're so enthusiastic about not sitting back, because we have the best tool with Scantron's assessment solutions."

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