

**Meg Litts, Professional Development and Curriculum Specialist
Onamia Public Schools, Minnesota**

Case Study: Families and Educators at Rural Minnesota School District Transform Student Achievement With Perspective From Pearson

Meeting the academic needs of every student is no small task for Onamia Public Schools, a rural district in central Minnesota. With a population of 750 students residing across a large geographic area, a free/reduced lunch rate of nearly 70 percent and no public library within the district boundaries, providing every student with targeted resources has seemed nearly impossible. Understandably, the district has been facing challenges in meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals as mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Over the past few months, Meg Litts, the district's professional development and curriculum specialist, has been working with district staff and administrators, as well as students' families, to transform student achievement and instruction, and they are well on their way. At the foundation of their efforts is Perspective™, an online remediation and enrichment tool that ties assessment to instruction. Perspective provides students, families and educators with a roadmap to student improvement through targeted resources based on student test scores. It helps families understand how students are doing, helps educators prepare for their classes and details what to do to help students succeed. At Onamia and throughout Minnesota, students, families and educators have access to Perspective as part of the Minnesota Department of Education's efforts to encourage academic excellence for all students.

Onamia's students use Perspective's Learning Locator™, which connects individual performance on an assessment to learning materials scientifically selected to help them succeed. Each student receives a Learning Locator code on his or her state assessment report. The Learning Locators provide access to resources on the Perspective Web site

that are targeted to meet individual learning needs. Students can work through the activities and learning tools on their own or as directed by a teacher or family member.

"My push is to get Perspective into the hands of as many students as possible because it will help them achieve at a higher level," said Litts. She created and distributed a handout to let parents know what Perspective can do for their children and has been meeting with parents and teachers who want to learn more.

Because the district has a sizable number of families without home Internet access, Litts is exploring creative ways to expand access to Perspective. Her strategies include making school labs available to families, creating mobile labs, and talking with local employers about allowing parents to access Perspective on work computers during lunch or breaks. "We're making this workable for all families in our district," she said.

Litts said that families and other educators are enthusiastic about Perspective and what it can provide for Onamia students. "The district is hungry for this, and parents are excited to learn this resource is available," she said. "We're all on this journey together."

Teachers are also excited about what they can do with Perspective. For some, computers and technology are a new experience, and they're quickly seeing the value. As she shows teachers the ins and outs of Perspective, one of her goals is to increase their involvement in aligning student needs with appropriate learning resources and state learning goals – one of

her areas of expertise. “They’re excited to know there’s this resource available to them that’s aligned to the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments II (MCA-II),” said Litts. “I look at what I can do to help them – and what we might do before the next test.”

Teachers are able to create assignments for individual students or by learning groups or “strands,” which makes instruction flexible and manageable, she said. “A lot of the lessons are short and sweet but targeted,” she said. “Perspective is a great tool for differentiation.”

With easy access from any computer, students can use Perspective to stay on top of their studies if they’re home sick or on vacation. When students are leaving for a school break, teachers can assign them games or activities that will help them build particular skills. In addition, Perspective is playing an integral role in Onamia’s afterschool programs. “It’s a great resource during unstructured time,” said Litts. “The teachers in our afterschool programs can guide the students as they go online and bridge the connection between the classroom and after school.”

By the end of the school year, her goal is to see the teaching staff maximizing standards-based instruction to meet every student’s needs, as well as to increase family involvement. “With Perspective, I believe we’ll see that our students are getting the help they need, and that will drive up our AYP results,” she said.

After just a few months of use, Onamia is already seeing success. “As students make progress, they’re stepping up to the next levels. And having teachers understand the alignment process is golden because it helps them see the larger picture – and they’re sharing best practices,” said Litts. “I am really excited to find a resource that helps us do all of that.”

###

Visit www.PearsonPerspective.com