Stillwater

OKLAHOMA

RtI, PLCs and a Holistic Approach to Data

MC SUCCESS STORIES
Educators at a rural junior high had a vision for a holistic data-driven approach to student learning, but were struggling to track data transparently and instantly.

After Stillwater Junior High staff selected MasteryConnect to support key components of their approach, they saw the results they were hoping for.

Read about their holistic approach to student learning and how MasteryConnect helped them:

› Track formative data in real time
› Use data to drive teaching and learning
› Supercharge teacher collaboration
› Improve student performance

STILLWATER

RtI, PLCs and a Holistic Approach to Data

An Interview with
GEORGE HORTON
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AT STILLWATER JUNIOR HIGH
The educators at Oklahoma’s Stillwater Junior High are big fans of data. They believe that gathering it from different sources produces a more holistic view of student learning than any single source can provide.

But this approach led to some challenging questions. How could they make data accessible and transparent? And how do they use it meaningfully with limited time to review and plan?

Although longitudinal and weekly data were manageable, the formative, standards-based data was proving tricky to incorporate into the response to intervention (RtI) and professional learning community (PLC) processes.

“There is no one silver bullet that’s going to solve all of our educational problems,” explains George Horton, assistant principal at Stillwater Junior High. “So we take relevant pieces from research-supported processes such as Response to Intervention and Professional Learning Communities and personalize them to meet our needs.”
That’s why Stillwater had a vision: to triangulate longitudinal, weekly, and formative data into one “digital dashboard”. This dashboard would empower teachers to effectively implement the Stillwater approach to RtI and PLCs.

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- GEORGE HORTON

To solve their data challenges, Stillwater Junior High turned to MasteryConnect to help teachers track student learning of Oklahoma state standards in real time, and then use that data to drive instruction and fuel collaboration.

In a school of 825 students, Stillwater educators drive instruction with three types of data.

**LONGITUDINAL DATA** includes year-over-year state testing combined with curriculum-based progress monitoring administered three times during the year to create the “big picture” of a student’s base level of understanding and learning trends.

**WEEKLY DATA** consists of grades, behavior, and other data sources that coincide with eligibility requirements for sports and other activities, and serve as an indicator of a student’s holistic approach to learning. Weekly data helps to answer questions such as whether the student is motivated and engaged, or whether he or she persists in the face of learning obstacles.
**FORMATIVE DATA** includes daily formative assessments, activities, and observations and provides teachers the real-time feedback about student levels of understanding of individual standards, objectives, and skills that contribute to a student’s overall success.

These three levels of data help teachers make better instructional decisions, according to Horton. “**Longitudinal** data gives a bird’s-eye view of student progress over time, and **weekly data** provides a glimpse into a student’s affective behaviors,” he explains. “**But neither longitudinal nor weekly data help teachers identify student levels of understanding on a daily basis—only formative data can do that.”** MasteryConnect has given them the tools they need to gather that formative data more effectively.

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Stillwater teachers have the flexibility they need to formatively assess in the best way for their subject and students. Elective teachers use the MasteryConnect Performance Grader to track student progress using rubrics, while core content teachers incorporate Socrative into their classrooms for quick formative checks. And teachers across the content areas use Chromebooks and the MasteryConnect Student App to deliver assessments online, which provides instant feedback for both teachers and students.
When using data to inform instruction, Stillwater teachers shared a major obstacle: time. To help them overcome this challenge, administrators have scheduled opportunities into the school schedule for teachers to review the data they collect in MasteryConnect and provide additional support to students.

First, administrators established “Administrative Absence (AA)” days, day-long sessions for teachers to work together to review big ideas and implement high-level changes around standards, assessments, curriculum, and instruction. Careful to balance teachers’ desires to work with their students and minimize disruption to learning, the administrators set aside these days to give teachers the time they need for more meaningful collaboration.

The junior high also holds “tutorials” for students, which are thirty-minute classes held every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. To determine the priorities for each week’s tutorials, teachers collaborate around weekly and formative data they gather using MasteryConnect.

Stillwater holds two types of tutorials—intervention and enrichment. Intervention tutorials, which can be closed or targeted, are designed based on whether the student needs help in many areas or in one targeted standard or objective. Students may also attend enrichment tutorials, depending on their levels of mastery for the prioritized subjects each week.

“Enrichment tutorials provide opportunities for students to extend and expand their learning,” says Horton. “In addition to walk-in homework help, teachers and other staff members offer over fifty different enrichment tutorials, including origami, debate, and sign language.”
Priorities shift from week to week, depending on the weekly and real-time formative data teachers gather, so tutorials provide the opportunity for all students to explore enrichment as well as benefit from interventions. Another bonus: each teacher has the chance to work with every student at some point during the year.

Improving the transparency into school data was a primary goal of Stillwater administrators. And MasteryConnect has helped them achieve just that.

The transparent and low-stakes visualization of formative data has allowed them to have more meaningful conversations around data and instruction. “For generations teachers have taught great things behind closed doors, and nobody else knew they were doing it,” explains Horton. “With MasteryConnect, teachers can identify areas where colleagues’ students have done well and ask ‘How did you teach that?’”

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By bringing these great things to light, so to speak, teachers are able to learn from each other and expand their own instructional “toolkits” in a comfortable, safe setting.

In addition to using this transparent data to collaborate formally in PLCs, teachers also collaborate informally. For example, Special Education teachers explore and add to resources found in MasteryConnect Resource Pins.
The 2015-2016 school year marks the third year of implementation for Stillwater Junior High’s personalized approach to RtI and PLC, as well as its third year using MasteryConnect—and the data is coming back positive.

Teachers are collaborating formally and informally, using data to drive instructional decisions, and providing students with opportunities to reach their full potential. And, most importantly, teachers’ increased focus on meaningful collaboration and data-driven instruction are reflected in student outcomes: the last three years have shown consistent progress in student performance at aggregated and disaggregated levels.

Stillwater continues to leverage MasteryConnect in their mission to provide a learning environment that respects the individual needs of its students and helps them to reach their full potential. Horton explains, “One of the huge pieces which MasteryConnect supports so well is the ability for teachers to collaborate with each other in meaningful ways over relevant, real-time data.”

GET MORE INFO
Learn more about how MasteryConnect can help you better manage student data in order to fuel collaboration and improve student outcomes.

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MasteryConnect provides formative assessment and competency-based learning solutions to educators around the world. MasteryConnect combines professional development with its web and mobile platforms, including Socrative, to help teachers identify student levels of understanding in real time, target students for intervention, and use assessment data to inform instruction. We now serve over 2.5 million teachers and 21 million students in more than 85% of U.S. districts and 170 countries.