Fremont Middle and High Schools Achieve Highest Test Scores in the County with the Fast ForWord Program

Fremont Public Schools
Fremont, MI

District Statistics

Number of Schools: 5

Number of Students: 2,139

Grades: K-12

Website:
www.fremont.net

Student Population:
90% White
6% Hispanic/Latino
1% Asian/Pacific Islander
1% African American/Black
<1% Multiracial

54% Economically disadvantaged
12% Special education

Challenges
- Students reading below grade level
- Achievement gap between the highest and lowest performing students

Solution
- Fast ForWord®

Populations served
- Struggling readers in grades 6-10

Results
- Gains on Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) English Language Arts (ELA)

"We've implemented a number of online programs over the last 20 years, and we have found the Fast ForWord program to be the most successful program for our students."
— Ken Haggart, Superintendent of Schools

After being labeled a "Focus" school by the state of Michigan in 2012 due to a large achievement gap between the top and bottom performing students, Fremont Middle School sought out programs to positively impact all of its students. The school chose Fast ForWord and implemented the evidence-based reading and language program with fidelity. It was designated a "Reward" school in 2014.

"Our middle school earned that designation because of the large improvements in reading and math by our Title I and special education students," said Superintendent Ken Haggart. "Our students have come a long way and we give a lot of credit to the Fast ForWord program for that."

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In 2015, Fremont Public Schools expanded its use of the Fast ForWord program, and it is now used at Fremont Middle School, Fremont High School, and Quest Alternative High School.

"Many students end up in the alternative high school because of a reading deficiency that has not been addressed. Our goals are to bring students up to grade level and give them the opportunity to achieve success," said Haggart.

Targeting the root causes of reading difficulty in the brain

The Fast ForWord program improves reading skills with a unique brain-based approach. It targets the underlying cognitive skills that are core to reading including memory, attention, processing, and sequencing — all within a reading and language framework.

In Fremont Public Schools, the Fast ForWord program is primarily used with students in grades 6-10 who are not reading at grade level. Students are identified for the program based on benchmark assessment scores. They work on the Fast ForWord program 30 minutes a day, three days a week, and are supervised by Title I teachers. They may also use the program after school and in the summer.

"In our district, the original purpose of the Fast ForWord program and the purpose today remain the same: to bring all students to grade level in reading proficiency," said Haggart. "We've implemented a number of online programs over the last 20 years, and we have found the Fast ForWord program to be the most successful program for our students."

Improving fluency and comprehension

The Fast ForWord program is also the only reading program with a virtual personal reading tutor. As students read aloud in the Reading Assistant Plus portion of Fast ForWord, the program listens and provides real-time, corrective feedback. This real-world reading reinforces newly learned skills and rapidly builds fluency and comprehension.

"We use this to provide individualized instruction for our Tier 2 students who are close to reading at grade level but not quite there," said Haggart. "With Fast ForWord, we can provide many different opportunities for students to improve their reading abilities."

Increasing state test scores and students' confidence

Since Fremont Public Schools began using the Fast ForWord program, students have achieved gains on the M-STEP ELA assessment.

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"Our reading scores are typically the highest in the county, and we give credit to the Fast ForWord program for that. In grades 6-8, our scores have been 10 percent above the county average over the last five years," said Haggart. "Fast ForWord use helps us close the gaps between our highest and lowest achievers, which is one of the focus areas in Michigan. Students have increased their reading comprehension and their reading speed. As their skills increase in reading and literacy, that flows over into all of their other classes, resulting in improvements in their grades and greater confidence in all subject areas."

Parents have noticed differences as well. "We often hear comments from parents about how their son or daughter has improved in reading. They say that prior to using the Fast ForWord program, their children didn't want to read. Now they don't have any problem reading in class and they're reading books at home. They want to read because they enjoy reading," said Haggart. "We've seen improvement in all of our students who have used this program."

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