

Using Academic Behaviors to Prepare Students for College and Success

ENGAGE™ Case Study

The McPherson Unified School District, McPherson, Kansas, uses ENGAGE Grades 6–9 as a key component for increasing students' citizenship and college and career readiness.

McPherson Unified School District enrolls approximately 2,400 students and is recognized as one of the leading school districts in Kansas. The district received a waiver to use ACT assessments, including ENGAGE, instead of the Kansas state standards for the purpose of determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind.

McPherson is a strong supporter of the value of academic achievement measures (EXPLORE®, PLAN®, and the ACT® test) but wanted to look at students' academic behaviors, as well. According to Superintendent Randy Watson, McPherson strongly believes that "schools should take a broad look at a student through a variety of assessments." ENGAGE allows McPherson to examine another set of factors that can pinpoint which students may lack the skills needed for success during and after high school.

For the baseline year, McPherson has been administering ENGAGE to all students in grades 6 through 12. McPherson assesses students in grades 6 and 9 to obtain baseline measures (grade 6) and to confirm that students are on track

(grade 9). Based on ENGAGE results, McPherson is targeting several groups of students for intervention: (a) those who show a low probability of academic success (defined as a high school GPA below 2.0) using ENGAGE's Academic Success Index, (b) those with low scores in key ENGAGE scales, such as Academic Discipline, and/or (c) those who show a pattern of low academic achievement scores and low ENGAGE scores.

Through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), staff review the results from ENGAGE along with academic achievement measures from EXPLORE, PLAN, WorkKeys®, and the ACT. In addition, teacher advisors are given the results to use in helping students create future plans and develop their skills. ENGAGE results also are shared at parent meetings alongside academic achievement test results. Superintendent Watson indicated that McPherson has had very positive responses from both students and parents: "They like that we are helping them."

The Outcome

When it comes to individual, school, and district-level outcomes, McPherson expects to see positive outcomes related to its C3 initiative—Citizenship, College, and Career Readiness. The district's goal is to have every student ready in these three areas upon high school graduation. Watson said, "ENGAGE gives us valuable data on the critical psychosocial variables which can enable students to be successful."



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