



ONALASKA MIDDLE SCHOOL

Onalaska, Washington

PROFILE

School District: Onalaska School District

District Enrollment: 890 students

School Enrollment : 190

Grades: 6-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 56.7%

Ethnicity:

- 89% Caucasian
- 8% Hispanic
- 3% African American

CHALLENGE

A small unincorporated community in the southwestern portion of the state of Washington, Onalaska has one school district with one middle school, Onalaska Middle School (OMS). Full of community pride and values, administrators at OMS strive to give every student a quality education.

One of their biggest challenges was to deliver individualized learning, especially in the development of writing skills. In the traditional classroom using regular teaching practices, students were not able to move ahead or slow down if they needed. OMS wanted to provide students with the ability to work at their own pace, giving advanced learners enrichment opportunities while providing modified instruction to those who were struggling.

SOLUTION

In 2011 OMS administrators purchased Pearson's WriteToLearn™, a reading and writing practice as well as assessment software. Since the program is web-based, students access the program via the school's iPads™ and log into their own accounts.

In the fall of 2011, WriteToLearn was implemented in all of the 6th and 7th grade writing classes. One teacher oversees these classes using WriteToLearn on a weekly basis. Every week students work in the classroom to revise and publish writing assignments. "I teach a concept to students that aligns with Washington's Common Core State Standards," explains Terri Dalsted, writing teacher at OMS. "For example, I might teach effective strategies for

Continues

"Our test scores in writing have improved by 20%. That is a success that our entire community can celebrate."

— Terri Dalsted
teacher

"I like the way WriteToLearn shows us what we can improve on."

— Jana Girt
7th grade student

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SOLUTION (Continued)

introductions and conclusions and students will then apply the strategy using WriteToLearn prompts. With this program, I am able to assign different prompts at different grade levels that align with each student's learning."

Since the state standards drive the curriculum taught in class, students, while using WriteToLearn, are preparing for the state level assessment. Students are exposed to the program for two years since the same teacher oversees both the 6th and 7th grade writing classes.

RESULTS

Dalsted continues, "It's amazing! I can now assign different grade level prompts and students can apply the strategy taught at their level. I have students that are in the 7th grade writing 9th grade material. Before WriteToLearn those students had to stay with the rest of the class because individualized writing was so difficult to manage with 110 students. Likewise, those students that didn't move as quickly in their writing were able to slow down and work their way up to grade level and still apply a particular strategy on their writing.

"I presented the achievements to our school board at an open meeting. Five students were chosen to share their essays with board members, community members and parents. The prompt from WriteToLearn was, 'What impact has your community made on you?' The students read their essays and the results were outstanding both academically and emotionally for our community.

"After using WriteToLearn for one year students' writing scores on the Washington State assessment, Measurements of Student Progress (MSP), improved by 49 percent. The program was so effective and efficient that I was able to condense one year's curriculum into one semester in the first year of using it. Therefore, I was able to delve deeper into writing and prepare students for the success they experienced last year."

In 2011-2012 the state of Washington used the MSP to test reading and math skills of students in grades 3-8. The MSP is a standards-based test that measures how well students are mastering skills defined for each grade. Below are the test scores for students in 7th grade. WriteToLearn was implemented during the 2011-12 school year.

Onalaska Middle School Writing MSP Scores- Measurements of Student Progress

GRADE LEVEL	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
7TH GRADE	61.3%	55.9%	79.2%

"Since WriteToLearn has come around, my writing has improved 100%."

— **Zachary Huffman**
7th grade student

"I like that we get more tries after the computer grades your paper. You get five more tries to make it better."

— **Landon Ward**
7th grade student

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