

Changing the Way Teachers Teach and Learners Learn

Maury County Public Schools, Tennessee

The Maury County Public Schools (MCPS) system serves more than 12,000 students in grades K–12. DreamBox partnered with MCPS to create greater learning opportunities for their elementary and middle-school students, as well as their teachers.

In 2016, Maury County implemented a community-created, district-wide improvement plan entitled, “7 Keys to College and Career Readiness.” This initiative identifies seven educational goals each student must reach in order to achieve his or her full potential.

Among the goals, there are three that pertain to math: Keys 2 and 3 require students to execute at or above grade level at the close of fourth and sixth grades respectively, and Key 4 requires all students to be proficient in Algebra I by the end of eighth grade. With these goals in mind, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Chris Marczak and his team partnered with DreamBox to help prepare Maury County to systemically and systematically meet the math needs of the 21st century classroom.

“When we started to look at Keys 2, 3 and 4, DreamBox was the software program that rose to the top,” says Marczak. “We loved the layout, we loved the format, we loved how it grows with the student as they progress with fluency—and the research behind it said that even if you use DreamBox just 20 minutes a week, your students are going to see growth.”

Additionally, to support the 7 keys initiative, Marczak used existing funds to create three new school-based instructional coach positions in every single school: one focused on project-based learning (PBL), one on leading professional learning communities (PLCs), and one on using data to inform instruction.

These data coaches collaborate with Maury County’s district-based data coordinator to understand the student performance data they’re getting from DreamBox. “We are assessing students to determine where they are and then really working with teachers to make sure they take that data and actually do something meaningful with it,” says Marczak.

“We can’t expect kids to be 21st century ready if we are teaching the way we have always taught... We have to get students to be globally competitive citizens, and that’s not going to happen with rows, textbooks, worksheets, and lectures.”

— Dr. Chris Marczak
Superintendent of Schools



Transforming learning with a data-driven, student-centric model

MCPS is moving to a more student-centric learning model. Teachers spend less time talking in front of the classroom in favor of a station-rotation, blended-learning experience in which students rotate between project-based learning activities, working on Chromebooks, and engaging in one-on-one or small-group mini-lessons with the teacher.

With district-wide alignment to project- and problem-based learning, students are excited about the work they are doing. Marczak has noticed increased attendance among students, which he attributes to both DreamBox and the increasing emphasis on PBL. He says, "We've noticed kids are more engaged in instruction in the classroom, and they're starting to show up more."

And, with an enhanced focus on PLCs, educators are collaborating better too. Of course, at the center of all this model is data. Data powers both PBLs and PLCs and helps keep students and teachers aligned, and moving in the same direction. Marczak says, "My pledge this year is to give teachers the ability to go deeper with DreamBox."

Building teacher capacity through relevant, job-embedded PD

Marczak sees an opportunity for educators in Maury County to take even greater advantage of all the reporting capabilities and features DreamBox has to offer, including the professional development (PD) on demand component. Maury County's multi-faceted approach to increasing numeracy fluency throughout the district relies heavily on getting teachers the professional learning support they need, when they need it—and DreamBox's MyFlexPD™ feature is one way Marczak is delivering on that promise. MyFlexPD empowers educators to deepen their understanding of math content in ways that are directly related to their students' specific learning challenges. It engages teachers in a dynamic, self-paced experience that enables them to use real-time student performance data as a starting point for relevant professional learning.

Because teachers and principals played an active role in choosing DreamBox, they're highly engaged, and invested in the technology for the long haul. And, Marczak is pleased with the feedback he's received from both teachers and students alike. Plus, statistical models run by the MCPS district data coordinator confirm greater levels of growth and numeracy fluency among those students who are using DreamBox regularly. Marczak says, "We will continue to use DreamBox, as long as we continue to see student growth, and in this first year of emphasis, that is *exactly* what we have seen."

MAURY COUNTY FAST FACTS

District: **Maury County**

Schools: **22**

Grades Using DreamBox: **K–8**

Teachers: **856**

Enrollment: **12,800 students**

ELL Students: **3.1%**

Economically disadvantaged students: **43%**

Students with disabilities: **15.2%**



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