

## *Using PVAAS and Other Data to Inform Instructional Practices*

### **Kennett Consolidated School District — Kennett Square, Pennsylvania**

Located in southern Chester County, the Kennett Consolidated School District is a rural district with five schools and approximately 4,100 students. By 2015, the district projects enrollment will increase to nearly 5,000 students. Among the fastest growing segment of Kennett's student population is English Language Learners (ELL). The Latino/Hispanic student population has also increased from 22 percent in 2000 to 35 percent in 2005 and the economically disadvantaged student population rose from 22 percent in 2000 to 34 percent in 2005.

To effectively meet the varying needs of these students, the district became immersed in data-informed decision making, particularly using performance data to target various student subgroups. For years, the district used its own analysis tools to manually retrieve, sort and analyze student data. While time-intensive, the information provided the best available picture of their students' performance.

Using this information, Kennett administrators used the information from their analysis to set goals for their Individual Education Plan (IEP) students in 2005-06. District administrators were pleased to learn that the district's 2006 PSSA data revealed a dramatic improvement among IEP students—improvement exceeding the Commonwealth's performance in reading and math for grades 5, 8 and 11. Additionally, Kennett met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2006, despite AYP red flags in four schools. District administrators attributed this success to using performance data to target students' individual needs.

### **An Introduction to PVAAS**

In 2006, Kennett received their first Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS) reports for 4th and 6th grade students who took the 2006 PSSA. Administrators and educators expressed immediate support for value-added reports because of the time it saved to manually collect and analyze data, and because PVAAS reports provided a clearer, more accurate picture of student performance.

"PVAAS has diminished the time factor for us and has allowed our educators to invest more time on what matters most—finding learning solutions for each student," said Victoria Gehrt, Assistant Superintendent. "Value-added information helps us focus in on all students, those who need the most support and those who need to be continually challenged."

Prior to receiving PVAAS reports, Kennett Middle School teachers were discouraged because they were unable to see whether their students were growing academically. PVAAS information changed everything. Teachers are motivated and more confident about their instructional efforts because they can clearly see where progress is occurring and where improvements need to be made.

"Once teachers believe improvement is possible and they can see that it is happening, the learning environment changes," said Leslie Bausch, Elementary Mathematics Coach. "Now, educators have important information that graphically shows them that all students can and should make improvements."

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## *Using PVAAS and Other Data to Inform Instructional Practices — continued*

### **The Power of Connecting Value-Added Information With Other Data**

District administrators and educators have experienced the power of using value-added information in combination with other data sources, including 4Sight data. As part of the Education Assistance Project (EAP), the district became involved with 4Sight testing, which provides readily accessible data about the probability of EAP students reaching proficiency on the PSSA and a pattern of students' historical performance.

"PVAAS and 4Sight data complement each other in such a way that our teachers have become highly involved in using data to inform their instructional practices to improve student performance," said Mary Lynn Vincent, Curriculum Supervisor.

The district will continue to emphasize the benefits of connecting value-added information with other data sources. Professional development efforts will be focused on training administrators to understand data for educational improvement, and how to effectively use the data that are available. As administrators and educators feel more comfortable with data, district leaders will encourage them to make informed, instructional decisions, then use 4Sight each quarter to assess whether or not various interventions are making a difference.

"The process of using data to identify needs, then having various interventions at our disposal will be part of our professional development goals in the foreseeable future," said Jane Pedroso, Curriculum Supervisor.

### **Teachers and Students Collaborating**

Kennett educators also are beginning to understand that test results are not disconnected from what each teacher does in his/her classroom. This new level of ownership is causing teachers and students to work together more collaboratively.

"Value-added information has caused our principals and teachers to seek out root causes of problems, look for interventions that are research-based and then assess regularly to see if the interventions are effective," said John Carr, Kennett Middle School Principal.

Kennett students are given regular and concrete feedback about their progress and have demonstrated greater ownership of their own learning. Teacher and student ownership have led to significant improvement for the district's targeted subgroups.

### **Want to Learn More**

For additional information about PVAAS and value-added professional development opportunities and resources, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Web site at [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us), email at [pdepvaas@iu13.org](mailto:pdepvaas@iu13.org) or call (717) 606-1911.