Jones County, Georgia School System

Quick Facts

- Public school district in Georgia

- Rural and suburban areas

- 8 schools:

  4 elementary schools
  2 middle schools
  1 ninth grade academy
  1 high school

- 5,544 students

- 735 certified and non-certified employees

Snapshot

District benchmarks, high stakes test scores, RTI information and more is at the fingertips of all Jones County educators with *DataDirector*.

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Jones County School System

The state of Georgia has set the bar high for its students. Georgia Performance Standards define rigorous goals. In Jones County, north of Macon, the public school system has responded to these heightened expectations by placing student data at the fingertips of every educator. *DataDirector* online data and assessment management solutions provide teachers with fast, easy-to-understand information, from high-stakes assessment and district benchmark scores, to daily classroom reports and Response To Intervention (RTI) program results.

"*DataDirector* keeps all that data in one place," said Vicki Rogers, Assistant Superintendent at Jones County, "It allows our teachers to be very well aware of where students are in terms of achievement." Educators can easily identify areas of improvement then focus their attention where it's needed most. "In the three years we've been using the system, I've definitely seen an improvement every year," said Rogers.

Because the data is immediately available, teachers can respond rapidly to their students' unique needs without waiting for reports from the district or state. "For any district that would like to have its data instantly ready, this tool is very effective," said Administrative and Curriculum Support Assistant Cara Bockholt.

DataDirector™
Understanding data for student success

Challenges

- Increase RTI success by gaining a greater understanding of struggling learners' progress on assessments and other measures
- Help teachers adjust instruction to the needs of their students
- Utilize more of the summer to plan for the upcoming school year

Solution

- *DataDirector*
- *Assess2Know*®

Benefits

- RTI students and their individual activities are tracked daily and made immediately available to educators
- Individual student performance records, available to all teachers, allows data, not just intuition, to drive instruction
- *DataDirector* provides CRCT reports in May, so the district doesn't have to wait for state reporting in July

Decisions based on data

Today's tough educational standards are forcing school districts everywhere to reassess their "business as usual" attitude and find new ways to meet their achievement goals. Jones County School System is using *DataDirector* to help make educational decisions based on data, not just personal observations.

 "At any moment, teachers know exactly where their students are. They can see they're highly successful on some standards, not so successful on others," said Rogers. That information helps teachers adjust their classroom activities to the unique needs of the class. "They look at the data and think, 'How am I going to do my job differently today? How will my instruction change?'" said Rogers.

Needs-based instruction

Teachers now adjust their teaching in response to the students' performance instead of following the same plan year after year. "The teachers have an obligation to know their kids," said Rogers, "The data implicates them for changing their instruction based on their kids' actual skill sets."

The dynamic, needs-based approach to teaching has resulted in small, but real, academic strides. "Third and fifth grade math have greatly improved this year. We're real happy about that," said Kelly Roberts, Executive Director of Pre-K thorough 5 Curriculum and Professional Development.

Tracking RTI learners in *DataDirector*

At the outset of the school year, every Jones County student is given a universal screener, an assessment to identify those at risk for achieving unsatisfactory academic outcomes or working below grade level. The results are categorized into tiers. 80% of Jones County children fall into Tier 1, 15% into Tier 2, about 3% fall into Tier 3, and less than 2% fall into Tier 4, which is Special Education. All students in Tier 2 through 4 are given RTI instruction plans.

Following the Response to Intervention (RTI) model, Jones County educators create targeted instruction plans for struggling learners. The instruction plans focus on the students' individual skill deficits. "Interventions are daily," said Rogers, "And we constantly monitor for progress goals." Assessment and progress monitoring is an integral part of RTI—and in Jones County, it's all supported with *DataDirector*.

A typical intervention for students with deficiencies in math may include working with the *Destination Math* interactive learning environment. Students whose language arts skills are not at grade level might be put into a supplementary phonics program. Individual coaching is an option for children whose skills in other areas are holding them back.

"I have definitely seen an improvement every year, especially in addressing students with disability and students with socio-economic disadvantages," said Rogers.

CRCT reports in May, not July

All teachers have anytime, anywhere access to the data they're authorized to see. When tests are entered into the system, results appear almost instantly. "The teachers want their data, they don't want to wait," said Rogers. Walk around a school while district benchmarks are administered and you'll see "most teachers at their computer waiting for results to pop up," said Cara Buckholt. Results appear minutes after the benchmarks are scanned.

DataDirector helps put the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) results in the hands of Jones educators months before the state reports are published. The state reports arrive every July, but the data itself becomes available in late May. "As soon as we get the data file from the state of Georgia, it's immediately uploaded to *DataDirector*," said Roberts. Jones County staff members disaggregate the results and create their own reports in *DataDirector*. Roberts added, "We don't have to depend on the state for reports. We can get a jump on the data."

Before they had *DataDirector* and were reliant on the state to provide CRCT reports, many Jones County schools didn't have enough time to fully determine their educational goals before the start of the school year. Now, as soon as the school year ends, principals and administrators begin assessing the areas of improvement for the next. "*DataDirector* allows us to start planning for the next school year far earlier than we could before," said Roberts, "That's really big." Administrators have the full summer to create educational documents, target goals, and establish improvement plans.

During the summer, teachers also receive their class lists and access to their students' data. "In July, I already have calls coming in," said Rogers, "The teachers say, 'I have four kids who never mastered this standard. I need to line up interventions.' They are already thinking about how they can modify their instruction."

Integrates well into teachers' routines

Jones County has been using *DataDirector* for three years. Introducing the technology across the school system generally went smoothly. "Learning something new can be a challenge," said Buckholt, "But when teachers realized how easy it was and how accessible the data was, we didn't have to work hard to convince people to use it. "

The tasks of looking up students and finding their grades were simple enough for teachers to perform without training. To help teachers master more complex reporting functions or make modifications to existing reports, the district held instructional sessions.

Today, staff members throughout Jones County have made *DataDirector* a regular part of their workday. "The ease of using it makes people want to log

on," said Buckholt. *DataDirector* is used for report cards, for identifying trends on districtwide benchmark results, for looking at patterns among grade levels, and for informal measures in the classrooms. "Even though we haven't had *DataDirector* that long, I almost don't remember what it was like before. It's so integrated into what we do every day," said Roberts.

Sharing strategies for success

With data so readily available, teachers have begun to share insights about ways of achieving successful outcomes. At grade level and department meetings, it's not uncommon for the conversation to flow from test scores into discussions of best practices. "Teachers look comparatively at their peers' successes," said Buckholt, "They ask, 'What are you doing? How'd you get your results?'" Collaboration over the different methods used by peers and instructional coaches is helping raise the level of instruction.

Longitudinal data has long-term value

Like every public school system, Jones County is moving into the future knowing that changes are ahead, both educationally and financially. The state department of education continues to make modifications to the state standards. The county, state, and federal governments also continue making changes to district funding.

Vicki Rogers and her colleagues in Jones County understand the value of *DataDirector*. The system provides the data they need to make educational decisions that lead to improved teaching and learning. *DataDirector* has helped the district move forward over the last three years, and Jones County is committed to *DataDirector* for the long haul. As the longitudinal data in the system grows over time, the district will be able to make even more effective decisions into the future. "*DataDirector* would be the last thing we'd give up in a financial crisis," she said.

For more information about *DataDirector*, visit www.riversidepublishing.com or call 800.323.9540.

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