
Greenwood School District
Greenwood, AR

*Improving Skills of
Teachers and Students*



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About Greenwood

Greenwood School District has 400 staff and is led by Superintendent John Ciesla. The district is located in Greenwood, AR, which is about 10 miles south of Fort Smith, AR and has a population of about 8,000 people.

“It is the mission of Greenwood Public Schools to provide a quality education for all students in a safe and nurturing environment.”

Greenwood Enrollment

Greenwood has just over 3,700 students with 1% Asian, <1% African American, 4% Hispanic, 3% Native American, 3% Multi-Racial, and 88% Caucasian. About 12% of students receive special education services.

About Implementation

Greenwood School District began implementing Rethink Ed in August of 2014. During the first year of implementation, the focus was on improving data-based instructional decisions and staff understanding of research-based teaching strategies. Staff participated in numerous virtual trainings on an ongoing basis. Patti Allison, the district's award-winning Special Education Supervisor, was extremely involved, and made sure she understood exactly how to use Rethink Ed to support their students. Patti would frequently call her Rethink Ed Professional Services Director with questions, and they would set up time to collaborate on the systematic implementation. This consultation model was deemed to be effective and Greenwood created an internal position, an Autism Specialist, to provide this type of coaching support to educators in the district. Audrey Kengla, a speech pathologist at Greenwood for 11 years, moved into the position of Autism Specialist. Audrey completed the Rethink Ed Trainer program in October of 2015. Throughout Year 2 of implementation, Greenwood educators frequently joined Rethink Ed Office Hours, a shared web conference, monthly to review questions with their Professional Services Director. Audrey also met with staff to provide additional coaching. During Year 2, the district increased usage to active progress monitoring on 100 students in their self-contained classrooms! Now in Year 3, the district independently implements Rethink Ed with great success. Audrey has maintained her Rethink Ed Trainer certification, trains all new staff on Rethink Ed, and continues to provide coaching to all team members. The district has expanded implementation of Rethink Ed to their inclusive settings. Greenwood's success is demonstrative of their commitment to the effective professional development practiced of coaching, strong leadership, and the commitment to build internal capacity.

Rethink Ed Helps General Education Teachers Transition Into Special Education

Like many parts of the country, Arkansas has a serious shortage of trained special education teachers. As explained by Audrey Kengla, Greenwood's Autism Specialist, their district does not "have the qualified, ready-to-go professionals" that are needed to fill special education positions. To solve this problem, the district must often transition general educators into special education teaching positions. This requires thoughtful planning and professional development. These teachers targeted for transition may have years of experience teaching but, they "really have no special education background." In the past 2 years, Greenwood has "had 2 general education teachers who have had to step into that role" with "no background in autism, no background in disabilities." While these teachers have a "kind heart" and "good communication skills," that is "about all they brought to the table." With the challenge of "figuring out how to truly meet the needs of all the students, not just at a minimum level, but at a level that

is ensuring their best chance of maximum success," it's critical for these teachers to access professional development and tools to ensure delivery of quality intervention to special education students. Tatum Williams, a middle school integrated math teacher and inclusion specialist for Greenwood, is one of the teachers who made the transition from serving general education students to now also serving special education students. After beginning her work in special education, she "realized (her) heart was really with working with those children" so she "went back to school and got (her) special education degree."

Rethink Ed helps teachers transition to their new work responsibilities, providing video training modules that they can watch at any time and a straight forward curriculum and lesson planning tool to meet the needs of special education students. It also provides a simple data collection and graphing tool to assist with monitoring of IEP goals and objectives. Audrey shared that over the past few years, Rethink Ed has really helped make that "transition from a general education classroom to a special education setting

much smoother.” She points out that it’s difficult to take them out of the classroom to get the necessary training. In-person professional development often requires driving almost 3 hours to Little Rock so the cost of travel and the significant time out of the classroom makes this untenable. Rethink Ed helps Audrey “fill in the gaps” and makes the process of training “much faster and much smoother” and she doesn’t have to worry about the students not making progress because a qualified teacher isn’t available for a period of time. The training modules in Rethink Ed provide an on-demand option that reduces the need to pull teachers from the classroom. . Audrey likes how this allows “for a lot of training to occur in a very short amount of time with no travel requirements.” Patti agrees that there is a need to “sufficiently train (teachers) while they’re going back to meet the state requirements and courses.” Rethink Ed’s training modules help these teachers to get started working with students and that having access to the Rethink Ed curriculum really helps them to better “know the strengths and needs” of students. She believes that Rethink Ed is an “excellent training tool” for teachers making

this transition or for any new teachers or paraprofessionals.

Greenwood Middle School Parents And Students Benefit From Rethink Ed Data And Resources

One of Audrey’s favorite parts of her job is when she is working with a teacher and she sees “a lightbulb go off” and when she sees them implement “evidence-based practice and (she) knows it is going to work and actually sees it work, and the difference that it makes for a child.” For Tatum, this lightbulb went off when she started working with special education students and “realized that data was important.” Rethink Ed has helped collect that data and because it is “very user friendly,” she and her paraprofessional are “able to log in and input data” quickly and easily. She states that “if (she) didn’t have Rethink Ed, (she’d) have to go into Excel and enter the data and make (her) own graphs.” With Rethink Ed, it “does all the work” for her. Audrey sees Rethink Ed helping many other teachers in the district because “a lot of teachers are not very

Excel apt, the ability to print out some nice graph data without having to use Excel has made their jobs much easier.” Amber Quillman, a special education teacher for middle school students, thinks that Rethink Ed has helped her not only with data collection but also with writing better measurable goals for her students. She sees it as an important tool for her and her paraprofessionals, with this tool, they “all have a common goal to work on with the students” and the data helps her with daily decision making,” She and her paraprofessionals can look at the data and decide if they “need to progress onto a new goal” or if they need “to go back and maybe work on some prerequisite skills.”

Patti Allison also sees value in data collection, particularly with parents because “it takes the guesswork out of a teacher and student’s progress.” She says that “there’s not much guesswork when you can show skills, you can graph it, you can collect it, you can take goals and objectives to match the child’s needs.” Patti gave a specific example of parents who were both highly educated professionals who had 3 children with autism in

kindergarten at Greenwood. They had concerns about the progress of their children and what their children were doing in school. With Rethink Ed, Patti was able to “show them the progress that the data had shown” and the parents “were just so impressed” and being able to see this data brought them relief and decreased their stress about their children’s progress. Audrey thinks that “the nice visual graphs have been very beneficial in annual review conferences with parents” or with “parents who are really concerned about something.”

At Greenwood, parents are given access to Rethink Ed and are able to print resources and use lesson plans at home. “The ability to sit in a meeting with a parent who is not very familiar with as many resources and being able to show them how to access resources so that they can help their child at home is so helpful,” says Audrey. Patti gave a specific example of a parent who was upset about her child not qualifying for extended school year programming. The parent was “very concerned that there was not that extension of curriculum for their child.” They supported the parent to use the

Rethink Ed resources and “how to use it throughout the summer in different areas of curriculum and language” and the parent was so excited that the disappointment of not qualifying for those extended services was lessened and she was relieved to know that there were options out there for her for her child over the summer.

Tatum Williams uses Rethink Ed in a very innovative way. She inputs her data and graphs it and shares it not only with the parents, but also with her middle school students. “Middle school children are very competitive” so being able to see their data improve in the graphs is motivating. Rethink Ed “allows them to see where they’re at and where they need to be” and Tatum believes this kind of self-monitoring is important to improve behaviors and build independence. Her classroom is 1/3 special education and 2/3 general education students so she uses Rethink Ed to help her special education students improve in their ability to “complete their work on time” or to “stay on task” for longer periods of time.

Conclusion

Rethink Ed has helped Greenwood to transition and train general educators to work in special education by providing professional development, curriculum, and data collection. Even for more experienced teachers, Rethink Ed improves data-based teaching and gives them a tool for writing high quality goals and provides a plethora of teaching resources. Greenwood encourages parent engagement through sharing data and providing access to the resources in Rethink Ed. Some students use Rethink Ed data for self-monitoring their own behavior. Audrey’s favorite thing about Rethink Ed is the “accessibility” that teachers, parents, administrators, and even students have to quality curriculum and efficient data management.





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