



## HIGHER TEST SCORES, FEWER CHALLENGES: HOW SPECTRUM K12'S SOLUTION HELPED WINSTON-SALEM/ FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

### WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

Total Enrollment:	48,500
Spec Ed Enrollment:	6,900
School Sites:	71
Special Education Teachers:	1,000

### CHALLENGES

- "Excessively long IEP meetings
- "Full-time staff that were exclusively hired for and assigned to ensuring special education forms compliance
- "Low morale and high stress for staff
- "Inability to properly track student records

### SOLUTION

Today, the district uses Spectrum K12's ENCORE!. The solution has eased the staff's burden of paperwork and compliance so they have been able to refocus on the most important part of their job: teaching their students. The result has been tremendous improvements in student learning and achievement.

### The Demands of Managing Special Education

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools is the fifth largest school district in North Carolina. Like other districts its size, WS/FCS faced typical challenges in managing its special education program. While the district accomplished the tasks required of special education, it incurred a high cost in administrative and staff resources to do so. To remedy this, WS/FCS chose Spectrum K12's solution for the district's special education management.

### A Solution That Reduces Costs, Paperwork, and Compliance Issues

Spectrum K12 reviewed the district's processes, timelines and forms, and incorporated them into the software. As the district used the system to relieve the burden of paperwork and compliance, it found that special education staff could focus more time on instruction and improving student achievement and less time on procedural issues. From referral to delivery of services, the Spectrum K12 solution guides users through the forms required for each part of the process.

"The Spectrum K12 staff, unlike typical software publishers, has the special education understanding and background to create a system that really supports the special education process," said Sam Dempsey, Director for Exceptional Children's Programs at WS/FCS. "Their receptivity, hard work, and dedication have been critical in creating a solution that makes things better instead of adding more work," said Dempsey.

The district also realized tremendous improvements in complying with state and federal special education regulations. Spectrum K12's solution has electronic forms that pre-fill data and eliminate redundant data entry, built-in compliance checking for forms and timelines, automatic assembly of forms packets for meetings, and automatic meeting scheduling. These features make it easy for WS/FCS staff to write complete, compliant IEPs and to hold meetings and deliver services on time.

"Having virtually eliminated our compliance burden, we are able to redirect our internal compliance staff from checking paperwork into support for the quality of the instructional programs," said Dempsey. "This has resulted in tremendous improvements in morale and retention of special education teachers.

"In addition, we have seen a significant increase in the number of fully-certified applicants to our district's special education programs," he said. "We have begun to gain a reputation as a district that diligently pursues ways to reduce paperwork and to assist and support special education staff."

The solution's caseload reporting feature has allowed WS/FCS to realign staffing for schools that have a higher special education workload than other schools. In the first year of implementation, WS/FCS achieved \$800,000 in staff savings through informed caseload management and personnel assignment. This equals approximately \$115 per special education student in the district.



*Extraordinary Solutions for Exceptional Populations*

"After 25 years in special education in four districts and two states, [the Spectrum K12 solution] is the most helpful process tool I have seen. For the first time, we may actually be able to deliver the real promise of IDEA."

Sam Dempsey, Director for Exceptional Children's Programs, WS/FCS

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**"Improved reading scores among special education students by 20%**

**"Achieved test scores that were 15% higher than the state average for students with disabilities**

**"Saved \$3 million annually in special education costs**

**"Decreased the time spent preparing IEPs from over 1 hour down to 15 minutes**

**"Decreased the length of IEP meetings by 57%**

**"Eliminated 95% of IEP procedural compliance issues**

**"Redirected 67% of compliance staff from checking IEP compliance to evaluating quality of services**

**"Reduced staff turnover by 20%**

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#### The Most Important Benefit of the Spectrum K12 Solution: Improved Student Achievement

The Spectrum K12 solution benefits more than WS/FCS's teachers and administrators. The district's exceptional students have realized the most important gain of all. After implementing the solution, the district's students with disabilities achieved a 20% increase in their reading scores, and scored 15% higher than the state average for special education students on state tests.

WS/FCS has also seen a reduction in the number of parent complaints filed with the state, due to improved effectiveness in handling parent issues at the district level. Electronic access to student records speeds the response time to parents, as well as to state and federal officials.

"We expected that a good information management system would ease the administrative burdens in programs for students with disabilities," Dempsey said. "However, the size of the gains we found in the areas of revenue reallocation, staffing quality, and positive student outcomes was surprising."

#### ENCORE! Developed for Educators, by Educators

The intuitive performance of ENCORE! is a result of the technologies that drive it and the real-world experience of the educators that helped develop it. Spectrum K12 is comprised of educators, parents of special needs children, and former education directors and school administrators who appreciate first-hand the challenges of managing the special education process, and endeavor to ease them.

#### about Spectrum K12

Spectrum K12 School Solutions (formerly 4GL School Solutions) is the leading provider of software applications and professional development for teachers and administrators of special populations. Designed for school districts of all sizes, Spectrum K12's products remove the paperwork burden from teachers and administrators, giving you more time to focus on what you love - educating children.

#### Info

For more information about Spectrum K12 and our proven solutions for special populations, please visit our Web site at [www.spectrumK12.com](http://www.spectrumK12.com), contact us by phone at 800.490.8445 or via email at [info@spectrumK12.com](mailto:info@spectrumK12.com).