

What Educators Are Saying

CESA Purchasing Case Study: Dreambox

September 2015

The staff at CESA Purchasing is always looking for ways to help educators and school leaders get the professional development and training they need to effectively use the products and services they purchase. This need intensified with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards and the difficulty special education teachers were having with new math instruction techniques.

By 2013, CESA Purchasing had had an agreement with Dreambox Learning, an adaptive and interactive math curriculum for elementary students, for over three years. Through CESA Purchasing, districts could take advantage of a cooperative purchasing agreement to purchase the curriculum at a discount.

Although it was a great deal for educators and districts, having access to such a discount was not the same as teachers knowing how to best use it with students.

Cynthia Holt, co-coordinator for CESA Purchasing, heard CESA 2 consultants express concern that the new Common Core standards for math were problematic for elementary special education teachers. Kevin Anderson, then Math & Science Education Consultant for CESA 2, confirmed that he was hearing the same thing from districts and teachers. "At the elementary level, special education teachers and those doing interventions don't always get significant training in math methods," said Anderson. "And they needed some practical help in teaching math to those students."

CESA purchasing staff began to realize that these teachers, in particular, would quickly be overwhelmed with all they had to do.

The Connection

When Holt discovered that Cathy Fosnot, a nationally-recognized speaker and author, was on the advisory board for Dreambox Learning, she quickly reached out to Michael Sarmiento, Account Executive at Dreambox. He agreed with her assessment.

It was just around this time that they discovered that Fosnot was going to be in Wisconsin as the keynote speaker for the statewide Wisconsin Mathematics Council Conference. They quickly tapped her to come and offer training to elementary special education teachers. As the CESA 2 consultants learned more about DreamBox from Cathy, they opened up the registration for Title, RtI, and other educators who would benefit.

"We knew she already had a following in Wisconsin," said Sarmiento, "and so this was a perfect fit."

The Event

In April 2013, CESA Purchasing and Dreambox Learning co-sponsored a one-day workshop, *Models of Intervention: Reweaving the Tapestry for Elementary Mathematics*, for area teachers, many from CESA 2. Led by Fosnot, teachers learned how to create effective intervention programs using a blended approach and how best to address Common Core State Standards in their interventions.

Thanks to CESA Purchasing's model of reinvesting funds back into professional development opportunities, along with Dreambox Learning's willingness to subsidize the event, the cost for attending the full-day workshop was kept very low at \$25, just to help cover lunch and administrative fees.

"It's always a 'win-win' when we reinvest our savings back into professional development," said Holt, "ultimately providing resources for educators so they can help Wisconsin students succeed."

Seventy-two teachers participated in the event from districts across southeast Wisconsin. Many districts sent teams of teachers to learn from Fosnot, as well as working one-on-one with her to fine-tune their instructional strategies.

"The teachers had very positive feedback," said Anderson, who also facilitated an optional follow-up workshop later in the fall. "They took away many tangible ideas from the day." Anderson is now the Science Education Consultant at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

The Advantages of Partnering

Although CESA Purchasing has contracted for discounted pricing with Dreambox Learning, Holt, Anderson, and Sarmiento all agree that the relationship between the two organizations goes far beyond a simple vendor agreement.

“Dreambox likes to work more as partner, not just a vendor,” said Sarmiento. “CESA Purchasing has always worked with the best. When we have educational thought leaders come to Wisconsin.”

Looking Ahead

Building on the success of the 2013 event, CESA Purchasing and Dreambox Learning partnered once again to bring Cathy Fosnot back to Wisconsin. On November 9, 2015, Landscapes of Learning: Powerful Lenses for Assessment and Conferencing was hosted by CESA 4. Participation was open to teachers in all CESA 4 with a focus on various mathematical topics, planning with developmental landscapes, and document and assessing learning in ways that make sense.

“With the success of the CESA 4 training, CESA 3 has now contacted us to develop something similar for them in the southeast corner of the state,” said Holt. Plans are in the works for a late spring 2016 training.

CESA Purchasing continues to work with DreamBox to bring both their elementary and middle school adaptive learning software to districts and is excited to support their newer Spanish version.

To learn more about CESA Purchasing and their more than 60 vendor contracts you can access for free, go to cesapurchasing.org or contact Cynthia Holt at 1.262.473.1470.