



FUTURE READY CASE STUDY #2



Topeka,
Kansas



Topeka Public
School District



14,050
Students



28
Schools



Urban

Enhancing Personalized Student Learning Through Data Use

Topeka Public Schools is located in northeast Kansas and serves students in grades Prekindergarten through 12. The student population is 40% White, 30% Hispanic, 19% Black, and 9% of two or more races. About 74% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and 11% are classified as English language learners.¹

Before [Future Ready Schools \(FRS\) resources](#) were leveraged in Topeka Public Schools, the district established a one-to-one technology initiative. Students in secondary schools had Chromebooks, and the district was in the process of providing devices for elementary students. However, beyond having access to technology in classrooms, teachers and students were not actively engaged with the devices, nor were they consistently using open education resources, a key district priority. New district leadership in Topeka, already familiar with the FRS resources and coming from another Future Ready school district, introduced incentives to provide teachers and students with a more in-depth level of instructional planning using data-driven decision making.

FUTURE READY FOCUS AREA

- Collaborative Leadership
- Personalized Student Learning
- Robust Infrastructure
- Personalized Professional Learning

¹ Source of district statistics is the 2014–15 Common Core of Data, the most recent year available at time of publication.

Transition to Digital Learning

District leaders at Topeka Public Schools understand that leading a transition to digital learning and becoming a Future Ready district requires a shift in mindset to enhance the use of technology resources. Topeka's Superintendent, Dr. Tiffany Anderson, explained: "It's how you think and how you lead. You're really leading for the future, to make sure that kids and staff are ready for what the future holds. And you're really leading to transform and engage learners—adults and our young learners." To support this learning transformation, Topeka Public Schools rolled out a data dashboard to provide leaders at the district, school, and classroom levels with continuous, up-to-date access to student academic and behavioral data.

The purpose of the dashboard is to make data-driven decisions ranging the landscape from district monitoring and improvement to day-to-day instructional improvements in the classroom. The dashboard pulls data from an electronic data warehouse that includes academic, behavioral, and demographic data. Modeling data-driven decision making began at the district level and has become a focus in school- and classroom-level discussions during the past year. Superintendent Anderson stated, ". . . it's really grown into something pretty remarkable for us." School leadership teams now meet every 30 days to review the data and discuss the use of technology-driven curriculum and instructional strategies. According to Superintendent Anderson, Topeka's teachers have begun to incorporate the dashboard in their practice. Teachers have access to real-time data, can view how well individual students are learning content, can immediately reteach needed concepts or skills, and can track cohorts of students and find and share formative assessments. School and district leadership can also access data for various purposes, such as tracking consecutive absences or mapping the frequency and location of discipline incidents. Next year, the dashboard will also include an assessment tool that can be used to monitor proficiency rates. Eventually, students will be able to access their own personal data, keeping them informed about their academic progress in real time.

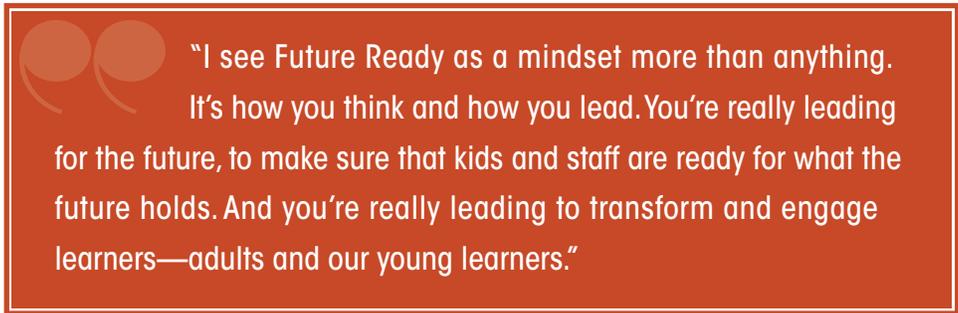
In addition to the instructional focus, the dashboard also supports the district in its efforts to become trauma-informed. Teachers and leaders track student discipline and referral data, student data from the positive behavioral interventions and supports system, and attendance data. The dashboard can then create cohorts of students and identify tiered supports.

Use of FRS Resources

To facilitate the transition to digital learning, Topeka's leaders began with the District Leadership Self-Assessment. They used the experience and resulting information to ensure not only that the technology was in place, but also that there was a common understanding about how the technology should be used in the classroom.

District leaders in Topeka also focused their Future Ready efforts on leveraging connections through the Future Ready Summit. Key district staff, including technology coordinators and an improvement specialist, attended the Future Ready Summit. After attending the summit, these staff members networked with

other districts and engaged in systemic assessments of district resources, considering the status of technology use in the district and identifying goals for Future Ready implementation. The technology coordinators also expanded monthly teacher professional development on the use of technology in the classroom and trained school technology team leaders on integrating the use of digital data dashboards in addition to increasing the use of digital resources in classrooms. The coordinators, moreover, created an interactive, open education curriculum that is being piloted in science and mathematics classrooms.



“I see Future Ready as a mindset more than anything. It’s how you think and how you lead. You’re really leading for the future, to make sure that kids and staff are ready for what the future holds. And you’re really leading to transform and engage learners—adults and our young learners.”

Results

Use of the data dashboard has generated thoughtful and impactful discussions about interventions for students and has allowed teachers to change instruction in real time. At the end of the week, or even at the end of each school day, teachers can access data to identify those students who have mastered the standards and those who are struggling. The dashboard automatically uploads data for teachers, relieving teachers of a significant time burden. The goal in Topeka is to continue use of the data dashboard to tailor instruction to individual students’ needs.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

District leaders in Topeka Public Schools have focused efforts on relationship building. Before new practices can be introduced, relationships must be built across the district. Superintendent Anderson noted, “Without relationships, no significant change in learning for adults and students can occur...Understanding the needs and perspectives is essential when working to change mindsets.”

About This Case Study

This is one of nine case studies that examine and document districts' uses, applications, and perceptions of the Future Ready Schools (FRS) professional learning resources in their efforts to become Future Ready. The resources of interest include the Future Ready District Pledge, the Future Ready Interactive Planning Dashboard (and District Leadership Self-Assessment), and the Future Ready Summits. The FRS resources are built on a Future Ready Framework with a set of seven Gears to support a comprehensive transition to digital learning.

Visit <http://futureready.org/> for more information on Future Ready Schools and the resources discussed in the case studies.

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