



School psychologists use digital clinical assessments, increasing student engagement

St. Cloud Area School District 742

The Challenge

School psychologists in St. Cloud Area School District 742, a large district in Minnesota, administer clinical assessments to approximately eight hundred students a year. Relying on paper and pencil to administer the tests, they wanted to find a way to save time and increase their efficiency.

When they learned about Q-interactive® from Pearson, a digital system for administering and scoring clinical assessments, they were intrigued by its potential to improve efficiency and student engagement. The fact that Q-interactive is an iPad®-based system also appealed to them, given that the district was already using iPads in the classroom.

The district approved the psychologists' proposal to purchase the system, as well as Q-global®, Pearson's web-based platform for scoring paper tests and administering online questionnaire-type tests. District 742's nine psychologists began using both systems in the 2015–2016 school year.



Pearson

PROFILE

State

Minnesota

District Enrollment

10,270 students

Grades

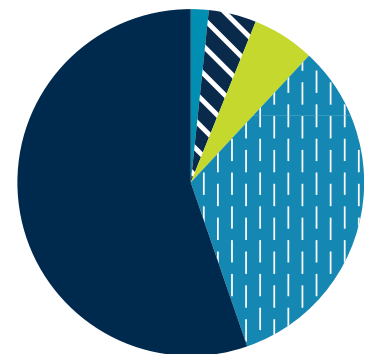
PreK-12

Students with Special Needs

18%

Ethnicity

- 55.7% White
- 32.5% Black
- 6.1% Hispanic
- 4.4% Asian
- 1.3% American Indian



A Digital Clinical Assessment Solution

The psychologists received training in using Q-interactive in a webinar run by a Pearson representative, who walked them through the system and showed them its various features. They then practiced administering parts of the WISC®-V to each other to better familiarize themselves with the system. They trained themselves on how to use Q-global.

Q-interactive is now the district's primary tool for intellectual testing, although it still uses paper and pencil for a few clinical assessments not on the digital system. The main tests the district administers on Q-interactive are the WPPSI™-IV and the WAIS®-IV, in addition to the WISC-V. It primarily uses the BASC™-3 rating scale on Q-global.

According to Tyson Zitzow, one of the school psychologists and the district EL evaluation consultant, and Patrick Russell, another school psychologist, the two digital systems have a number of key benefits for practitioners and students:

1. Save Time. Zitzow estimated that using Q-interactive saves him 30 minutes per test. He saves 10 minutes by administering a digital clinical assessment instead of a paper-and-pencil version. The system's automatic scoring saves him another 20 minutes since he no longer has to hand-score tests.

He appreciates that "with a click of a button," he can generate a report. With another click, he can get an interpretive report, a "really nice" feature, according to Zitzow, that provides "additional information such as recommendations based on the scores and suggested interpretations that one could use in writing up a report."

Russell emphasized the convenience and efficiency of using the BASC-3 on Q-global. He no longer has to mail a paper form to parents, wait for it to be returned, send it to the district office to score, and then wait again for the results to be sent to him via email or interschool mail. Instead, he can email parents a link to the online rating scale. Once they have completed the scale, he can go into the system and, "boom, there's the report," he said. "You just crank it right out. It comes out of your printer. All your data is right there in front of you." He estimated that with the digital system, his administration time is cut by 20 percent.

2. Adjust test batteries during administration. Compared to paper-and-pencil administration, Q-interactive makes it more efficient for psychologists to get an accurate picture of a student. That's because the system provides real-time scoring and enables them to adjust test batteries as they administer clinical assessments.

"I really like that you can edit your battery on the fly," Zitzow remarked. Referring to a student he had tested earlier that day, he said, "I saw that this child scored particularly low in a certain area, but I wasn't quite sure what to think of it because the scores were pretty discrepant across different subtests that were assessing the same thing. So I just clicked 'edit' and added two subtests and got additional information that will really help me with my interpretation."

Had he been using a paper-and-pencil assessment, he would not have seen the need to administer the two additional subtests until he had scored the first tests. Then he would have needed to schedule an additional testing session with the student.

3. Increase student engagement. "I love the WISC-V on Q-interactive because it causes the student to be more involved in the testing itself," Russell said. "I was actually just testing a student last week, and when he sat down and saw the iPad sitting there, he was all excited. 'Wow, I get to use the iPad?' He just couldn't wait to start."

Russell explained that usually if he needs to stop administering a test, "it's because of scheduling or something like that. It's not because the student is fatigued or has lost interest and doesn't want to do any more."

Zitzow told a story about a student with motivation difficulties who "needed some reinforcement to try his best": "We could take a short break, and he got to do some sort of desirable app on the iPad in between subtests. To be able to flip back and forth for him on the fly was really helpful."

According to Zitzow, "the iPad helps engage all students because most students are visual learners by nature." Looking at just a screen on an iPad, as opposed to a whole test booklet, also reduces stimuli, "which is helpful for many students who are easily overwhelmed."

“Q-interactive saves me time, the students are more engaged, and it’s more efficient.”

—Tyson Zitzow, School Psychologist and District EL Evaluation Consultant, District 742

The Results

By spending less time on the assessment process, Zitzow and Russell now have more time to provide information to the teachers who support students. They have gained time to observe struggling students in the classroom, review outside data on students, and do teacher consultations.

"I'm not stuck so much in my office," Russell commented, explaining that he has extra time "to sit down and talk to teachers about students."

Zitzow noted that the information they are gaining about students is more reliable. By standardizing the administration of clinical assessments, Q-interactive makes test results more accurate. Prompts that pop up as practitioners administer tests and timers for timed subtests help ensure that practitioners are following testing protocols. The automatic scoring prevents practitioners from making scoring errors. Because assessments are "very structured on the iPad, it helps things to be more valid," he explained.

Zitzow recognizes that switching from paper-and-pencil to digital assessments is a huge change for psychologists. But he urges them to make the switch: "The whole reason we're in the field that we're in is because we want to support kids. If there's a way we can do that and get more accurate results, then we really need to be doing it."

"I spend 20 percent less time in my office behind my desk."

—Patrick Russell, School Psychologist, District 742

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on the district's total student enrollment, your district will have a license to use Pearson's Digital Assessment Library and our Q-interactive and Q-global systems for administration, scoring, reporting, and data storage for any individualized evaluations within your school district.



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