

Brown Deer, WI



Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

HOW ONE DISTRICT PUT INSIGHTS TO WORK TO MAKE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

Dr. Deb Kerr takes her role in preparing students for life after high school seriously. As Superintendent of Brown Deer Schools, Kerr manages one of the most racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse districts in Wisconsin. As Kerr explains, “We are aspiring to become a world-class school district, producing graduates that can compete across the world, not just in Wisconsin or in the United States.”

So how does the leadership at Brown Deer know if their students are learning the skills they need to succeed in a competitive global economy? The district turned to the OECD Test for Schools, a school-level assessment that provides unique insight on students’ applied knowledge and competencies, as well as the school learning environment, to help drive their continuous school improvement efforts.

Brown Deer chose the OECD Test for Schools because it delivered numerous key benefits, including:

- + Providing actionable data to inform teaching practices
- + Measuring applied knowledge in math, reading, and science
- + Assessing crucial critical thinking and problem solving skills

- + Gaining insights on school climate and student engagement
- + Benchmarking against other schools in the U.S. and around the world
- + Offering best practices from other high-performing schools and education systems worldwide

As Kerr notes, “The OECD Test for Schools was a mission-driven decision. One of the reasons for taking the test was that we wanted to learn the deeper levels of proficiency that our students could attain and where they stood in comparison to other countries as we need to prepare students to lead the world.”

5 Key Things about the OECD Test for Schools

- + Based on a sample of 15-year olds
- + School-level test that can be taken annually
- + Measures student knowledge in reading, math, and science
- + Includes student engagement and learning environment survey
- + Based on PISA

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Dr. Deb Kerr, Superintendent
Brown Deer Schools, WI

Based on the internationally recognized Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the OECD Test for Schools delivers valuable benchmark data that allows schools to compare themselves to other schools in the U.S. and around the world. The in-depth test reports provide educators with analytics and actionable data on teaching and learning to inform system-wide improvements in the core areas of math, reading, and science.

As Charles Tollefsen, Assistant Principal for Brown Deer Middle High School says, “The OECD Test for Schools re-emphasized some of the existing data points we had and was a good precipice for change.”

As a result of the OECD Test for Schools data, Brown Deer made shifts to their instructional approach.

- + After learning that students in grades 7-9 felt disconnected from the math instruction, the district overhauled the math curriculum and retooled the instructional style to incorporate a collaborative, group-based approach in which the teachers function more as a facilitator and less as a “sage on a stage.”
- + After learning that students were strong readers, but not reading beyond their assignments, school leaders instituted a daily, 30-minute independent-reading period for all students and invested in acquiring more engaging reading materials.

The OECD Test for Schools also helps school leaders understand their school culture, connecting the learning environment to academic performance. It provides insights on how to improve relationships between students and teachers, and it helped Brown Deer identify professional development opportunities. “We believe having great relationships with kids encourages motivation, engagement, and in turn, student achievement,” Kerr explains.

In 2011, Brown Deer made a commitment to their nearly 1,600 diverse students to provide the educational experiences necessary to create global-ready graduates. With insights from the OECD Test for Schools, Kerr and other district leaders now have the data they need to answer this important question: Can their students compete globally?



District Snapshot

BROWN DEER, WI



PRE-K — 12TH GRADE STUDENTS

1,581

LEARNING NEEDS

5%

OF STUDENTS ARE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT

17%

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

ECONOMIC MARKERS

46%

OF STUDENTS ARE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

PRODUCT USE

IMPLEMENTED THE ONLINE OECD TEST FOR SCHOOLS

2016

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