

SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

Viewing Challenges as Opportunities: How Bristol Virginia Public Schools Helps Drive Student Achievement

A small district in the heart of southwestern Virginia, Bristol Virginia Public Schools (BVPS) treats its students like family.

“We are a tight-knit community and know our students and parents by name,” said Dr. Keith Perrigan, superintendent, who has deep connections to BVPS—he took the helm in 2017 almost 60 years after his father graduated from the district. “We know our students’ goals as well as understand the unique challenges they face by being in a high-poverty area.”

Committed to viewing those challenges as opportunities, the district wanted to ensure it had the best supports in place to help all of its students succeed. It also wanted to help its schools that lost accreditation regain it.

Bristol Virginia Public Schools



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What They Did

Under Perrigan's leadership, the district implemented a number of best practices to ensure the ongoing success of its students.



Lead with Data

BVPS educators knew that ongoing remediation, intervention, and differentiation were important to student achievement, but they needed to delve more into the data to guide these processes. The district turned to its *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* and assessment data to help.

"*i-Ready* provides teachers with the data needed to know where students are on skill acquisition and then it helps support their instruction," said Jennifer Hurt, director of federal programs. "A lot of times, programs only show teachers how much time students spend using the program and not their progress or the areas where they may need extra help. *i-Ready* is different."

"We really know our kids inside and out, and *i-Ready* is a piece of that as it shows us what they need and when they need it," said Ginger Richmond, reading specialist and elementary summer camp coordinator. "As a reading coach, I can look at the data and see that one of my fifth graders needs extra support in phonics and then focus my instruction for that student."



Constant Monitoring

The district is always monitoring student progress to track student mastery of the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL).

"Whether it is during small group instruction or the online lessons in *i-Ready*, our teachers are always monitoring students' progress and engagement," said Cynthia Shannon, math specialist.

"At our monthly RTI meetings, we are also looking at the data—both at a big-picture level and a student level," said Richmond. "This constant monitoring is a priority for us and lets us know when we need to provide interventions or extra supports."



Create a Culture of High Expectations

Above all, BVPS has established a high bar for its students and teachers alike.

"We want all of our students to thrive, so we do everything possible to help them," said Perrigan. "We refuse to let them fail."

"We also do a lot to equip our teachers," said Richmond. "We always want them to feel supported, so they, in turn, can better meet the needs of our students."

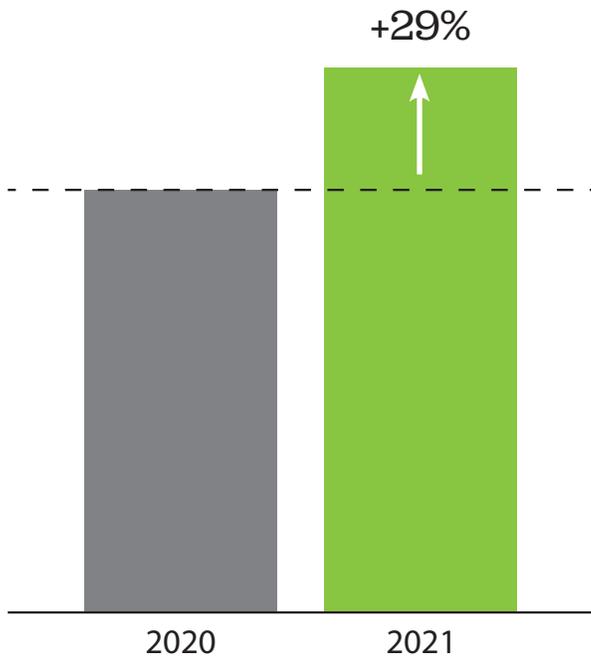
What They Accomplished

These best practices have contributed to ongoing success at BVPS. Today, all six of the district's schools are fully accredited. This includes one of its elementary schools, which went from being in the bottom 10 percent in the state in 2014–2015 to receiving a Title I School of the Year distinction in 2019.

In 2021, BVPS ranked seventh in the state on relative SOL performance compared to relative poverty enrollment. This was a 29-percent increase in ranking from the prior year.

"Despite the fact that we are spending a significant amount less per pupil compared to more affluent parts of the Commonwealth, our district is performing very well," said Perrigan. "With the help of the programs and processes we have in place, our teachers and coaches make all the magic happen."

BVPS SOL Performance as Compared to Poverty Enrollment



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