

# CASE STUDY

## BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

One of Florida's largest school districts has discovered the power of RTI for Behavior and the benefits of the Leaps behavior solution - not only for exceptional and special education students, but also for its entire student body.

### District-Wide Success for Behavior and Beyond

Broward County Public Schools, which includes the city of Ft. Lauderdale, includes 229 schools and 60 partnering charter schools. The student population is diverse, with students coming from South and Central America and the Caribbean. Broward also has a large African-American and Hispanic population, as well as a significant transient student population from the migrant workers on local produce farms.

Like many school districts across the country, Broward's financial status has suffered because of the economic downturn, with local tax base funds eroding because of a significant drop in the real estate market.

But Broward has proactive administrators who understand the importance of making behavioral issues a priority. The district wanted to address behaviors both programmatically and systemically, so they began the hunt for something that would work within the district - and within their limited budget.

### Addressing Problem Behaviors - and the Ability to Teach Change

Initially Broward was looking specifically for a behavioral application that could be easily integrated into the classroom for students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders - in this case, special and alternative education students. A smooth implementation was critical for these exceptionality classes - especially given the precious amount of time teachers had to spend on behavior.

"As a former classroom teacher of students with severe emotional and behavioral issues, I spent an exorbitant amount of time researching, planning and often even creating my own lessons to address the social, emotional and behavioral deficits of my students," explains Beth Williams, District Curriculum Supervisor for Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities, Broward County Public Schools. "This is in addition to teaching all of the required academics, so ease of use was especially important for us when identifying programs."

Broward also wanted a program that had a teaching component to it - something they thought was lacking in other behavioral applications.

### CHALLENGE

Broward County wanted to be proactive and address district behavioral issues for its special and alternative education students, but a tough economy and diminishing local tax base funds had adversely affected the school district's financial status and made choosing the right program a real dilemma.

### SOLUTION

Broward County chose the Leaps behavior solution because of the program's teaching component that went beyond consequences to help student develop solid replacement behavioral skills; its easy integration into an educator's busy school day; and its effectiveness in school classrooms.

### RESULTS

Not only did Leaps' online, research-based behavior solution deliver for the district's initial needs, the launch was so successful in special and alternative education classrooms that Broward County chose to implement it in all classrooms for a complete district-wide behavioral solution, and now has more than 1,300 Leaps educators. The district's purchase of a full license and multi-year option has also increased overall savings and helped with money-saving strategy for the long-term.

Williams says it's not enough for staff to rely only on consequences to change behavior. Rather, a successful behavioral program must do more than that.

"In reviewing many behavioral intervention plans and observing in classrooms, I found that there was a lot of emphasis on what the problem behavior was and what the student would be able to do and possibly even the replacement behavior," she says. "But there was very little emphasis on **how** we were going to teach those replacement skills."

### An Experiment - and a Revelation

Broward chose Leaps as their behavioral application, implementing the program in a few select classrooms and intervention settings as a specialty behavior solution for students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

"I continuously look for tools to address the needs of this population of students," says Williams. "I found assessments that identified student areas of need, and I found a number of social skills curriculums and resources that addressed areas of deficit. I came across Leaps and was impressed right off the bat - it was an easy-to-use, comprehensive program that did both."

As Broward educators started to see positive results and measurable successes in their exceptionality classes, administrators soon realized that they had a unique opportunity to be more proactive and could use Leaps to tackle behavior issues head-on for **all** students - not just those with special needs. For Broward administrators and educators, it was a revelation - and a reason to go further.

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"As we all know, social, emotional and behavioral needs are not limited to students with an E/BD eligibility," says Williams. "We saw the need to expand our use of Leaps."

### Impacting Change, District-Wide

Within a few short years, Leaps went from a small implementation in several select exceptionality classrooms in just a few schools to an all-encompassing and district-wide implementation in 229 schools and in all 60 charter schools.

Broward administrators discovered that Leaps was applicable well beyond the exceptionality classrooms - and with exceptional results.

By being proactive, the district now sees social and emotional development as an attainable goal within general education classrooms, in exceptionality classrooms, and in programs and settings for students with ongoing behavior struggles. And, the easy-to-use format integrates smoothly into a teacher's busy school day where there is often limited time to teach.

"Leaps web-based lessons are identified at the click of a button, based on the assessed needs of a student or groups of students," says Williams.

### Solid Support, Solid Benefits

The Leaps implementation has resulted in dramatic changes that have affected thousands of Broward County Public School educators and students - at every school at every level across the entire district.

For example, consider that the district began the 2009-2010 school year with 19 Leaps educators; by January 2010 the number had climbed to **more than 1,300 educators** - and is still growing!

Besides strong district support for a program that has made such a difference in the classroom for students and teachers, Broward is also reaping the benefits of Leaps outside the classroom. Through Leaps, administrators can now easily access and maintain Fidelity of Implementation reports, as well as meet the progress monitoring reports that are essential for compliance of standards-based protocols such as *Behavioral Response to Intervention (B-RTI)*.

This ability means that baselining needs, identifying a starting point, fulfilling needs with content, and measuring results is now a straightforward and simple process for the district that saves time and headaches.

"Our schools have found Leaps to be an excellent resource for them, particularly with the required implementation of B-RTI," says Williams.

And, by purchasing a district-wide license, Broward was able to generate considerable savings over the standard per-site Leaps implementation. Broward also chose to purchase a multi-year option, which has further increased the district's savings at a time where cost-cutting strategies are around every district's corner.

"Leaps is designed to identify areas of need and to equip staff with lessons to teach replacement behaviors and then measure and report the results," says Williams. "Our schools have found it especially helpful and are thrilled that Leaps is correlated to our Florida Sunshine State Standards, as well as to our **district's emphasis on** Character Traits and Bullying."



For more information on the Leaps behavior solution, please visit [www.SELforSchools.com](http://www.SELforSchools.com) or contact us at [info@SELforSchools.com](mailto:info@SELforSchools.com) or toll free (877) 775-3277.