



# Math Intervention and Special Education

Accelerating growth for students scoring below standard

## SPOKANE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FAST FACTS

- 34 elementary schools
- 55.7% eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
- 14.5% special education

## DREAMBOX IMPLEMENTATION

- Deployed since 2009
- 15 elementary schools
- 4,600 students
- Kindergarten–6th grade classrooms
- Districtwide use for:
  - Preferral to special education
  - Tier II intervention
  - Developmentally impaired students
  - Behavioral intervention students
  - After-school tutoring program

## FUNDING SOURCE

- District special education budget
- District basic education budget
- Title I budget

## ABOUT DREAMBOX LEARNING

DreamBox Learning's Intelligent Adaptive Learning™ program accelerates learning by ensuring every student works continually in their optimal learning zone and helps all students achieve math proficiency.

### → CHALLENGE:

**Serving a high mobility, high need student population**

As Washington State's second-largest school district, Spokane Public Schools serves a diverse student population with a high need for academic and social support. Since Spokane is a regional hub for medical services, Spokane Public Schools sees a consistent influx of families seeking medical care in the area and copes with an unusually high rate of student mobility. Over 50 percent of students in Spokane Public Schools qualify for free or reduced-price meals, and approximately 40 percent of Spokane's elementary students are below standard in mathematics on the Measurements of Student Progress, Washington State's federally required test.

Tricia Gessele, the Coordinator of Student Intervention and Support Services in Spokane, describes the district's challenge: "If students are two years below grade level, making one year's worth of progress is not enough. Our challenge is to take students who need remediation and accelerate their growth. We need to help students make up more than one year of progress in a single year." With a flood of kids who perform significantly below standard entering the district on a continuous basis, the need for a consistent, high-

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quality, high-impact intervention solution in mathematics was crucial.

### → SOLUTION:

**Meet students in their learning zone with high-impact, individualized instruction**

For the past three years, Spokane Public Schools has used DreamBox Learning to improve math intervention and support special education in a systematic way to accelerate student learning. After recognizing DreamBox's strengths in conceptual building and its configuration to the district's strategy-based learning initiatives, Gessele and Spokane's special education team quickly moved to implement the program.

Because of the success of the students using DreamBox as an intervention tool and the positive feedback from students, parents, coaches, teachers, and principals, 15 Spokane elementary

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schools have chosen to use DreamBox schoolwide to support students in developing core number sense.

## → IMPLEMENTATION

### Providing differentiated support after skilled instruction

Gessele says, “For intervention and special education, we’re using DreamBox in critical areas where it’s not replacing skilled instruction but providing additional support.” That includes the district’s after-school tutoring program and its behavior interventional classrooms, where students are placed in a special setting due to behavioral issues. “This year, we also introduced DreamBox to our developmentally impaired classrooms,” Gessele says. “These students qualify for special education in the intellectually impaired category and are in a special setting due to cognitive delays. It’s really important that they develop a good number base so they can get to a point of independence in their lives. DreamBox provides that core number sense very nicely for them.”

## → RESULTS

### Support for students who have struggled in traditional classrooms

Gessele is convinced DreamBox is effective for students, whether their challenges are skills-based, problem-based, or conceptual. “DreamBox helps students develop deep mathematical conceptual understanding, while helping teachers fill in conceptual gaps,” she says. “It reaches students with widely divergent experiences in math and varying levels of conceptual understanding.”

For her part, Gessele says DreamBox is a rigorous program that meets the individual needs of students. “The adaptive nature of DreamBox is particularly useful in an environment where it’s critical to monitor frustration levels. It’s a preferred activity for the kids, many of whom have really struggled in traditional classrooms because they lack the patience and stamina necessary for academic work. It’s a tool that encourages—it’s as if optimism is built into the program.”

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