



CASE STUDY

Salem- Keizer Public Schools

Low-burden, high-impact school-based mental health program drives improvements in resilience and success

Proven results from Tier 2 intervention program led to expanded support and reach for large school district.

Situation

On the heels of the pandemic, the second largest school district in Oregon knew it needed to take action quickly. Panorama screener data showed increasing levels of students who were in need of support in the areas of self-efficacy and well-being, particularly at the Tier 2 level. With an already exhausted staff and a growing problem, the Director of Social-Emotional Learning & Mental Health, Chris Moore, Ed.S., set out to find a proven program that would expand capacity to deliver effective skill-building resilience support for students with Tier 2 needs quickly, without overburdening his staff.

Partnership

Salem-Keizer Public Schools is the second largest school district in Oregon serving over 40,000 students in 65 buildings. The district uses an MTSS framework to address students' needs, ensuring they are providing the right support at the right time for each student. Screening tools and key performance indicators are utilized to identify students needing additional resources and monitor progress.

The district first partnered with EmpowerU in 2021 at six sites to pilot its Tier 2 program at select middle and high schools and its Tier 1 classroom lessons at the elementary level. EmpowerU Customer Success Managers worked in concert with district leaders to coordinate staff training, implement programs with fidelity and monitor progress and success.

The ease of implementation in the midst of a pandemic was critical and resulted in exceptional results and feedback from both students and educators. The success of the collaboration led to quick program expansion for the 2022-23 school year from six to seventeen sites. Seeing a continued need for Tier 2 intervention across all grade levels, the district expanded Tier 2 programming into elementary schools in addition to middle and high school and expanded use of Classroom Tier 1 lessons at the elementary level.

At the close of the 2022-23 school year, nearly 1,000 Salem-Keizer students had benefitted from EmpowerU Tier 1 and 2 programs with data showing district-wide increases in self-confidence, motivation, resiliency, engagement and well being – and decreases in discipline referrals. The 2023-24 school year brought more expansion into five more sites, representing one-third of the district’s buildings. In addition, the district provided EmpowerU’s Educator Self-care and Resilience PD program to its staff.

Results

EmpowerU’s school-based mental health support delivered impressive results for Salem-Keizer middle and high school students with Tier 2 needs:



found EmpowerU course helpful



rated EmpowerU coach as crucial to success



would recommend EmpowerU to a friend



made goal progress

Salem-Keizer staff also recognized the impact of EmpowerU. One High School Counselor shared, “I love knowing the students create their goals based on their assessment results. It’s also helpful to know the data and outcomes measure SEB change pre-to-post program.” 100% of staff reported seeing an increase in students’ grades, wellbeing, and attendance. And 100% rated the program as easy to use.

“EmpowerU helped me take action and steps forward toward my goals. I feel like I’m growing and actually achieving them.”

- SALEM-KEIZER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT -

“With EmpowerU, my students are realizing they are in-charge of themselves and that’s what they need to focus on. Also, several parents have shared their students are using the calming tools at home!”

- ELEMENTARY TEACHER -