



Business Partner Profile

How the Kentucky ESA, GRREC uses AESA Business Partner Corwin to Increase Student Learning

If there's one thing that's true about teaching children, it's that change in theory is constant. Educators are always seeking that brass ring that will allow them to better reach their students.

That's why it is so important to keep up on the latest, most practical and most effective teaching methods. And that's why it is so important for ESAs like the Green River Regional Education Cooperative in Bowling Green, Kentucky, to pair with a company like Corwin to learn the latest practices in teacher and educator development.

In February, GRREC paired with Corwin to offer one of the company's three institutes. More than 300 educators from throughout Kentucky attended the two-day Visible Learning-Plus institute.

George Wilson, the executive director of GRREC, said the institute was a great success and generated much positive feedback. He said the first day was an examination to promote "the top, high-yielding strategies and also to put to bed strategies we have a vested interest in but aren't high yielding."

The next day centered around both how teachers can apply these strategies directly in the classroom and how school leaders can create an atmosphere where teachers can apply these strategies.

"Time is precious," Wilson said. "What can we do in the time that is given to be the most effective? The legislature is pushing us, so we need high-yielding strategies."

Mike Soules, Corwin's president, agrees: "What's remarkable about Visible Learning-Plus is that this isn't just another program or to-do list. When teachers and school leaders can ask questions and examine their own evidence - what's my impact? Is this strategy more effective than another? How would I know? - that's when you see excitement and creativity take off within a team," Soules said. "Our two-day institutes give educators the time and space they need to dig deep into paradigm-changing ideas like Visible Learning-Plus."

GRREC is a large ESA; it serves 42 districts with about 155,000 students. The students are widely diverse, which makes Wilson anxious to attend the next Corwin institute, the Cultural Proficiency Institute.

The culture that surrounds children is vast and deep, comprised of language, economic status, race, religion, heritage and location, among other things. Instead of trying to homogenize students, the Cultural Proficiency Institute asks educators to use that culture to better reach each student and provide the most thorough education.

Wilson was blunt about which cultural group needs to be reached at GRREC: "They're called hillbillies down where we live," he said, "and it's vitally important that we reach these children.

"Children of poverty speak a different language than the middle- and upper-class students. If you can't speak to them, then you can't teach them; just as if I were trying to teach a class speaking French. You've got to speak to them.

"There's been a smashing success from people who have done this work. Corwin really puts the proper tools on the ground."

John Fitzgerald
Education Reporter