
**Carroll Independent
School District**

Southlake, TX

**Carroll Independent School
District Branches Out**

**Rethink Ed Implementation
in Special Education to
Tackle COVID-Related Issues**



Carroll Independent School District Southlake, TX

About Carroll ISD

Carroll Independent School District (CISD) is located in the Southlake, TX area and has 11 schools with more than 8,500 students and about 1,100 staff. CISD follows the federal guidelines for the No Child Left Behind Act and is one of the largest districts in Texas to earn the top rating of “Exemplary” by the Texas Education Agency. They have a 97% attendance rate and 0% drop out rate and are consistently above state and national averages on assessments. The core values of the district are excellence, relationships, character and integrity, innovation, open and honest communication, and compassionate service.

Carroll ISD's special education department of about 700 students meets the needs of all learners and provides high quality services and support to students with disabilities. Dr. Denise McCrummen, the district Special Education Coordinator, relies on the Rethink Ed platform for a big part of her department success which centers around a multi-disciplinary approach with support staff, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, behavior analysts, school psychologists, and special education teachers all working together as a team.

Professional Development Connects the Team and Creates a Common Language

Initially, the district utilized the Rethink Ed professional development modules in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to get their team up to speed on the implementation of behavioral strategies with special education students. Because of the success of the professional development modules, CISD has opened up training to parents and paraprofessionals. Aaron Heil, the Special Education Facilitator and Trainer, states that staff are required to complete the Fundamentals of Special Education series, the Adaptive Behavior Analysis series, the ABA Basic Training, and the SEL Training series. In the past 2 years, 4 paraprofessionals have used the professional development modules from Rethink Ed to launch their careers, finish their degrees, and have been converted into certified teachers.

Mackenzie Holley, a special education teacher for K-4 students, who not only uses the professional development modules herself, also has her paraprofessionals complete it as well. She describes the training as “a common base” that they can all work off of because they “all have different experiences and educational knowledge” but the platform gave them “a place to go back to whenever (they) were having issues with behaviors or academics” because they “could then talk about something (they) all saw on Rethink.” She believes “it was a great platform to have (them) all on the same page.” Dr. McCrummen believes that Rethink Ed will continue to allow their department to inspire more paraprofessionals to finish their degrees and allow CISD to “groom (their) own” certified teachers. Aaron Heil has also observed that the professional development training has inspired a lot of staff to go further with their careers, and that Rethink Ed allows those individuals who “if (they) have that desire to go further than (they) absolutely can, and that’s exciting!”

Research-Based Scope and Sequence Gives Team Confidence in Rethink Ed Lessons

Dr. McCrummen and her team were “so impressed with the professional development pieces” that they decided to add on “the academic libraries and the rest of the special education platform.” The ease of use makes teaching more efficient and effective because all of the lessons come with a lesson plan and suggested goals and objectives that provide “one whole complete package for staff.” This is particularly beneficial for new teachers who are coming straight from college into teaching, the Rethink Ed platform helps them in becoming a new special education teacher. Aaron Heil also sees the value in the platform for new teachers because it provides a “scope and sequence” that teachers can follow “week to week” but that still “allows you to be flexible” and saves a lot of time because “you don’t have to go digging” to put a lesson plan together. Mackenzie Holley uses Rethink Ed in her lesson planning every day. She does “a morning meeting to start the day off and we focus on a social skill during that time.” She pulls the social skills from Rethink Ed and uses materials to

target a new social skill each day. One of her favorite skills to teach is emotions because a lot of her students have IEP goals that focus on emotions and it “is a more fun topic for them” and “it’s been super, super successful” because it is something that they can relate to. Some of Mackenzie Holley’s students are nonverbal and are communicating via assistive technology or signs and it can be challenging to engage these students at times. With Rethink Ed, she has “seen some of them kind of light up and take off because they are able to control it” and she feels like “it works so much better” and she’s seen “so many of them really show things that (she) hadn’t seen before.”

Amanda Rosental, a special education teacher for 4-5 grade students, also uses Rethink Ed “every single day.” She appreciates the scope and sequence and ease of lesson planning, which she is able to use with “little modifications and accommodations.” The Activity Center has made her “life so much easier” and she does not know what she would do without it. One of her students liked to jump around the classroom and grab things and was difficult for her to engage.

Using the iPad and Rethink Ed activities, she discovered that the student responded very well to visuals and the student was “more inclined to work” and now he gets “excited because he knows, oh, I did a good job.” While the district utilizes and values the academic library, one of the features that Dr. McCrummen values the most in the Rethink Ed special education curriculum is the comprehensive library of functional skills that support academic skills. She believes that the lessons allow students to “apply basic academic principles...functionally to daily living skills” and that these skills are more likely to generalize more quickly to other settings and situations. What they are seeing now she describes as “students making gains more quickly, and not only making gains with higher percentages on goals and objectives” but also “seeing it generalize across settings” such as from one classroom to another, across different teachers, across other services providers, and into the home and community. She believes this opens up the “home-school connection” and provides opportunities for more productive conversations with parents about student progress.

This is particularly important with distance learning, a new adjustment with COVID-19, where students must continue to work on IEP goals from home at times. Aaron Heil also notices the value of Rethink Ed in engaging parents, particularly with the data sharing. In the past, teachers would typically share percentages for IEP goals but with Rethink Ed, teachers can show “a graph that shows what it looks like” and “it just means a lot more” to parents to have a visual that they can understand.

Rethink Ed Eases Difficulties with Distance Learning and COVID-Related Issues

The Rethink Ed tools have made things far easier for teachers whose jobs Dr. McCrummen says have “always been hard” but now with COVID are harder. With both in-person and distance learning in place, teachers are able to use Rethink Ed to streamline lessons from school to home and allow teachers to “continue on with what they’ve been doing in the classroom.” Having parents use the same technology and the same vocabulary at home

provides the consistency that students need and when you get “that consistency across settings, clearly students are going to make more progress.” Aaron Heil shared a story about a student who “was struggling to engage virtually” and when the student returned to school, the staff trained the student to “engage with the Rethink platform” and when the student was forced to go into quarantine and return to virtual learning, “everybody was a bit worried about how that was going to go” but because the student had learned to engage with Rethink Ed at school, they were able to get that student to engage with Rethink Ed from home and the student “watched the video, participated in the activity, and they were not doing that before” so it ended up being a success story, despite COVID issues forcing the student into virtual learning again. Mackenzie Holley has also seen success with the shift to virtual instruction and says that she “felt really confident assigning kids lessons” and helped parents login so their child could “work on IEP goals at home right in front of them” and parents “didn’t have to create anything or run anything.” She thinks it has really helped parents who have chosen virtual instruction because they can “quickly access the material at home.”

Data Management Tools Allow for Data-Based Decision Making and Improved Communication with Parents, Advocates, and Lawyers

The research that goes behind all of Rethink Ed’s curricula, professional development, assessments, and data management tools gives CISD confidence in using tools that are likely to work for their students and for their teachers. One of the pieces of Rethink Ed that CISD finds extremely valuable is the ability to collect data and track progress, as well as build behavior plans and IEPs. Aaron Heil feels these tools are extremely helpful for teachers and prior to Rethink Ed, these capabilities had not “existed for any other program” and now teachers “have the ability to go in and edit and individualize an IEP or goal” and “then take data on it within the platform” and that just “hasn’t existed” prior to Rethink Ed. He appreciates the flexibility and ease of use of these tools. Mackenzie Holley utilizes the behavior plans regularly and uses the data to take into meetings and present to parents.

She feels that the graphs “make it really easy for everybody to see” what is going on with the student and to easily identify “what is working and what is not working.” She thinks that the data sharing is a good way to connect the educational staff and parents together. In addition to making data sharing easier, she values the ease of use of the behavior plan tool that “makes it go a lot faster” and instead of writing it from scratch, she can “copy and paste and plug in” the information that she needs for a good behavior plan. Rosental also uses Rethink Ed for IEPs which allows her to “make data-based decisions” and to write goals efficiently. She says that the IEP tools have “many benefits” and she uses it daily. McCrummen also believes that Rethink Ed can save districts from legal issues and costs. For example, she shared a story about an IEP meeting where an advocate was present with the parent. The teacher was discussing the student’s progress and the advocate said “I need to see the data.” The teacher “was able to share here screen on Zoom and show graphs” and “show what the lessons look like.” The mood in the room shifted at this point and they were able to have a productive dialogue for the remainder of the meeting.

While a multi-year contract may seem expensive, “lawsuits are more expensive” and are a lot more stressful for teachers, parents, and the district. Having a research-backed curriculum, digital data management tools, and documented lesson plans helps communicate with advocates and attorneys because rather than a legal battle, the district can say “this is research backed” and “here’s the data, here’s the lesson plans, here are all the pieces” which is “invaluable because it answers all advocate and attorney questions” and it “supports IEP goals and objectives” and “documents student progress.” Rethink Ed helps them “keep it out of the court system” and whenever a district can do that it saves the district money and a lot of time.

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Filling in the Gaps in Special Education with Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Dr. McCrummen and her team started to realize that their program was "missing some components" and that Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a "really critical factor for students in special education and now even more so with COVID".

When asked by the Rethink Ed team to pilot the SEL curriculum for special education, CISD happily agreed and they “were hooked” and their “teachers were blown out of the water” and are now implementing SEL as a critical part of their special education program. SEL allowed CISD to grow the Rethink Ed program beyond self-contained classrooms and it is now available to every special education teacher in the district, as well as opening up the platform to their general education counselors. As teachers and students try to return to school through the COVID crisis, more students (and teachers) are experiencing trauma and mental health issues. This is a concern and Dr. McCrummen feels that Rethink Ed’s ability to provide what is needed is part of the strong relationship that the district has with Rethink Ed. Aaron Heil shares Dr. McCrummen’s enthusiasm for the trauma toolkit and mental health modules because “we’re living a world that we don’t know what the impact will be” and “we’re going to have to be ready to respond as educators, as trainers, as coaches.”

Relationships, Not Just Customer Service

The successful implementation of the Rethink Ed program in CISD’s special education department can largely be attributed to the customer service that Dr. McCrummen describes as “incredible.” She describes herself as a learner and believes that “we can never learn too much about what we’re doing for kids.” The professional development days that were led by Rethink Ed gave teachers the opportunity to “show and tell” and “they got to show off the Rethink lessons they were teaching, which then gave every other teacher in the room the opportunity to think of a new way to implement Rethink in their classroom”. She says that teachers were then sharing resources and materials and talking about how to teach Rethink lessons and that when one teacher thought something was too hard to implement, “they watched somebody else show off what they did” and by the end of the training, all of the teachers were on board and engaged. Continuous Zoom sessions and phone calls with the Rethink Ed team have helped Dr. McCrummen

and her team stay on top of implementation and build a relationship with the team that she describes as more of a colleague or friendship than a customer kind of relationship. Aaron Heil agrees that the customer service has been essential for the success of the program and loves how Rethink Ed provides 1:1 coaching with himself and teachers as needed.

Happy Teachers = Happy Students = Happy Parents = Happy School

Dr. McCrummen feels that "supplying (teachers) with the tools and techniques and the strategies and the programs and the curriculum that they need to do a good job" results in "happier teachers" and when they have happier teachers, they have "students making more positive gains" and "it's just this awesome circle that just keeps feeding back into itself" that results in "better and more improved student performance." As an administrator, she loves that! She shared a story about a dinner that she had with administrators from other districts across the country at a conference where

she shared her experiences with Rethink Ed with the other administrators. They thought that she worked for Rethink Ed because she was so enthusiastic about the platform but she says that she is just "so passionate about what (Rethink Ed) has provided" because "it takes the workload off teachers and it's provided awesome training to paraprofessionals and therapy staff."

Mackenzie Holley's classroom has transformed since she implemented Rethink Ed, and she enjoys the moments when she sees "everybody sitting, all logging into Rethink" and working. She describes these moments as "magical because it is so calm, and they are all into it" and it just feels like a really successful moment for the whole team." CISD's success with Rethink Ed continues to grow and their passionate and committed team are a model for how teamwork and dedication to students can really work, even during difficult times.



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About Us

Rethink Ed combines the power of technology and research to deliver innovative, scalable and evidence-based instructional materials and supports for learners with disabilities. The comprehensive suite of tools ensures that every student develops the academic, behavioral and social/emotional skills they need to succeed in school, at work and in life. Rethink Ed positions educators, students and families for success. Rethink Ed is a division of Rethink First, a company that aims to place evidence-based treatment solutions in the hands of every educator, clinician or parent working with a child with special needs. We are unique in our footprint, leveraging the power of technology to provide clinical support, best-practice tools, and research-based content to all market segments, reaching more children with special needs than any other solution.

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