

CASE STUDY | MAP GROWTH

North Mason School District, WA



A Washington School District Builds a Foundation for Improved Teaching and Learning

The North Mason School District provides K-12 education for over 2,000 students from the western Washington area, including 700 high schoolers at North Mason High, 400 students at Hawkins Middle School, and 900 students at Sand Hill and Belfair Elementary Schools. Both elementary schools have Title I status based on poverty level and student proficiency on the state test. Half of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch.

North Mason schools began using MAP® Growth™ assessments in 2007, testing 2nd through 8th graders three times a year to assess their readiness for state exams. But individual schools and classrooms were still conducting a variety of benchmark assessments—without correlating that data with MAP Growth results. Some educators felt they were missing out on the full benefits of a coordinated testing plan. When NWEA™ invited them to participate in a full-day comprehensive assessment planning workshop, they saw it as the first step toward making a needed change.

Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Parker assembled a group to participate in the NWEA experience—a forum where educators are empowered to come to their own conclusions about what is best for their schools. Central to the workshop was a frank discussion about their current situation: What were they assessing, what tools were they

using, and what were they doing with the information? Participants were asked: What do you think are the purposes of assessment?

Parker and her team were so inspired by the NWEA workshop that they decided to take the rest of their colleagues through the same process at a North Mason retreat. “It was an eye-opening experience for people,” Parker recalls. “We had the teachers really talking about the purpose of assessment. Instead of simply saying, ‘Okay, you’re going to be doing these assessments,’ we took them through the process of really thinking about what you get out of it. And I think it helped move us along. It helped shift attitudes.”

One part of the NWEA assessment planning process involves listing all of the reasons for assessments and ranking them by importance. Parker replicated this exercise with her peers. “We tried to be as faithful as we could be to the NWEA idea,” she notes. In terms of what needed to be assessed and why, Parker says, “We wanted them to come to the realization on their own.”

From that point, the assessment planning change at North Mason began. Test data from MAP Growth and other assessments went into a data management system, and principals and teachers received the training they needed

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to access reports on student progress and to analyze MAP Growth data. Most importantly, they began using the data in ways that led to student growth.

Kristen Sheridan, principal at Sand Hill Elementary School, is one educator who embraced the district’s coordinated approach to assessments. Starting with the concepts from the NWEA workshop, she built a data-driven culture at her school that has students and teachers increasingly engaged.

“Shrinking the change” is the term Sheridan uses to describe her gradual shift toward data-based academic planning. She did this initially by creating student progress reports for each teacher—so they could focus on instruction. Soon teachers became excited about the possibilities the insight provided.

“Teachers are diving into the data,” Sheridan says. “And because it has become more understandable, I have several grades that are going a step further and digging into strand detail, and doing skill-based groups for students.” And the process is working: Over three years, Sand Hill has grown from the 50th to 60th percentile in math, and from the 60th to 80th percentile in reading. They have drastically reduced the number of students who are two or more grades below level.

“The thing I’m most proud of is including students in this process,” says Sheridan. “They have ownership. We have done goal setting and graphing of progress with them, so each time—fall, winter, and spring—students get a little card that says ‘MAP Target.’” Students are then expected to set their own goal, with a minimum of five points of growth from the previous test. Most of them make it; on their most recent MAP Growth tests, 88% of Sand Hill students reached their self-determined goal.

The growth at Sand Hill, Parker says, reflects the district’s focus on what they call four areas of “key work”: Using data to improve teaching and learning; a guaranteed and viable curriculum; highly effective instruction in every classroom every day; and collaboration that improves student learning. “Assessment is just embedded in each of those,” Parker says. “It’s at the core of what we do.”



School Snapshot

BELFAIR, WA



K-12TH GRADE STUDENTS

2,194

LEARNING NEEDS

9%

OF STUDENTS ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

15%

OF STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

ECONOMIC MARKERS

51%

OF STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

PRODUCT IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH IN

2007

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