

# CICS West Belden School, IL



## CICS West Belden Provides a Truly Personalized Experience with MAP Skills

At CICS West Belden, a school committed to personalized learning, a small group of fourth graders works around a collaboration station with Ms. Tartan, while the rest of the class is scattered around the room on couches, beanbags, and reading rugs. Students are working independently, having each pulled an iPad with their name on it out of a charging cart. On the overhead screen, Ms. Tartan outlined specific skills for each student to work on based on gaps identified in MAP® Skills™, a skills mastery and progress monitoring tool from NWEA™. Occasionally, students get up to tell her that they are ready for a mastery check.

CICS West Belden, along with all five charter schools managed by Distinctive Schools within the Chicago International Charter School (CICS) network, has embraced personalized learning. As a 1:1 school, CICS West Belden has seamlessly integrated their technology, formative assessment, and progress monitoring tools into each classroom. Each student has individual skills to work on in Math and Language Arts, and they use MAP Skills almost daily to identify skill gaps, check progress, and confirm learning. The result is a truly personalized experience for each student.

With half of their students performing below grade level, the teachers and school leaders at Distinctive knew they needed a different approach. The five CICS schools managed by Distinctive Schools used MAP® Growth™ as their interim assessment three times a year, and the teachers were comfortable with a data-driven approach to instruction.

But they needed something more frequent – to identify skill gaps, help target instruction, and then check for mastery – and they found that in MAP Skills. “We wanted something to keep up with our pace and our path to mastery,” Amanda Rychel, Vice President of Strategy and Product Development, explains. Distinctive leaders also liked the alignment between MAP Skills and MAP Growth.

According to Rychel, they followed a four-step model to implement personalized learning:

- 1. Flexible** - the learning environment is less about desks in a row and more about offering options to students.
- 2. Individual** - creating learner profiles that incorporate data about students from a variety of sources.
- 3. Learning paths** - personalized to reflect the students' interests and strengths.
- 4. Competency-based progression** - moving students through content areas at their own pace, as evidenced by formative assessment providing feedback in the moment and a skills mastery assessment confirming their learning—they use MAP Skills for both.

To adopt this personalized approach, CICS West Belden started by creating a flexible learning environment—which was a big hit.

To inform the individual learner profiles, CICS West Belden leverages MAP Growth data and other sources.

MAP Skills played a key role in structuring the learning paths and creating a competency-based progression at CICS West Belden. Thus, the success of their personalized learning plan relied in part on a successful implementation of MAP Skills. Here's what they recommend:

- + **FIND CHAMPIONS.** One project champion can set the vision and cultivate more champions in each building.
- + **START WITH A PILOT.**
  - **Create a “coalition of the willing.”** The Distinctive pilot included teachers who were willing to give it a try, had a deep understanding of data, and whose classrooms were technologically ready.
  - **Balance flexibility with some parameters.** The pilot team helped narrow the options in MAP Skills by choosing the subject areas and identifying the specific skill areas or strands. (Distinctive leaders started with Math and Number Sense, for example.) But, they gave teachers flexibility on how to use MAP Skills in their classroom.
  - **Manage expectations.** Be realistic with expectations from teachers. Ensure that there is operational alignment and the resources needed to succeed.
- + **LOOK AHEAD.** Plan for the curriculum teachers will need to address the skill gaps. CICS West Belden students, for example, use Khan Academy and IXL to practice their skills.
- + **COLLECT FEEDBACK.** The pilot team constantly gathered feedback from teachers—and worked closely in partnership with their NWEA team throughout the implementation.
- + **BUILD ON SUCCESS.** Grow from your pilot experience, expand the coalition, and drive the initiative forward. Distinctive started with Math in grades 2–5. Now, they use MAP Skills with all students in Math for grades 2–8 and for Vocabulary in grades 3–8.

Because of this thoughtful implementation, Distinctive leaders and teachers give MAP Skills positive marks. “MAP Skills is a great way to achieve that skill gap instruction that we desperately need,” teacher Melissa Feinberg says.

And the students? “Kids love it and ask for more,” Rychel says. Teachers see the tool helping students own their learning, and the students can see what MAP Skills provides to their teachers. Fifth grader Ashley told us, “It helps my teacher see where we have trouble and where we don't.”

The results of their hard work have been twofold: improved growth on their MAP Growth tests and a shift in mindset. “Winter to spring growth on MAP Growth was beyond historic levels,” Feinberg told us. Introducing a new approach to learning clearly bonds the students, teachers, and leaders at Distinctive around a common goal—bringing students up to grade level and beyond.



## School Snapshot

CHICAGO, IL



K-8TH GRADE STUDENTS

531

LEARNING NEEDS

40%

OF STUDENTS ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

13%

OF STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

ECONOMIC MARKERS

90%

OF STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

PRODUCT USE

IMPLEMENTED MAP SKILLS IN

2015

# nwea

NWEA is a not-for-profit organization that supports students and educators worldwide by providing assessment solutions, insightful reports, professional learning offerings, and research services. Visit [NWEA.org](https://nwea.org) to find out how NWEA can partner with you to help all kids learn.

© 2020 NWEA. NWEA and MAP are registered trademarks, and MAP Growth and MAP Skills are trademarks, of NWEA in the US and in other countries.

SEP20 | KAP849