

Rensselaer Central Schools Corporation, IN



Strong connection between MAP Growth and state test keeps district on track

When Superintendent Curtis Craig, Ed.S., came to the Rensselaer Central Schools Corporation in 2015, he discovered an assessment problem common to many districts. The assessment results—Renaissance STAR and Acuity at the time—were not well aligned to the new, more rigorous standards the district and state had recently adopted. In addition, some educators in the district were concerned that the results simply gave them a score—not the informative next steps they needed to improve student learning.

When Craig and other administrators began to research a new tool, they knew exactly what they wanted in their next assessment:

- + **Strong alignment** between their interim assessment and their state standards
- + **Accurate projections** on I-STEP+, the Indiana State Test, that they could rely on
- + Results that included **next steps for teachers** that apply to students across the spectrum of learning, including high achievers that they knew had more growth potential

Enter MAP® Growth™ from NWEA®. Craig had used MAP Growth in a previous district and thought it could help them identify students accurately and direct their efforts more efficiently. And they were so interested in the connection to I-STEP+ that they decided to create their own version of a linking study.

Testing the strong alignment

Why the strong emphasis on alignment to standards? The Rensselaer leaders cite two reasons:

- + First, it helps to identify learning issues early so they can intervene in a timely manner. Craig tracks progress and looks for gaps at the corporation level from year to year (a corporation is like a district).
- + Second, it helps them be efficient and “use our resources most effectively,” Craig notes.

“It is especially helpful knowing the level at which these students have to perform. Then, we can identify issues early. And with RIT scores [the scores from MAP Growth] going across grade range, we can compare scores in earlier grades. That’s a tremendous benefit that we did not have before,” Craig says.

“We need to know more than if they pass the test. Our standards are more rigorous, and we need more information. We are looking at growth for all of our students.”

Superintendent Curtis Craig, Ed.S.
Rensselaer Central Schools Corporation, IN

Mike Feagans, the technology coach and middle school teacher, adds that it helps in setting goals with students, too. “Our teachers like the linking study. They said, ‘We can hold our students to that. This helps our students see where they need to go.’”

When Rensselaer received their I-STEP+ results over the summer, they created their own version of a linking study, showing the percentage of students in each RIT range relative to the I-STEP+ pass rate. They wanted to independently validate the link to MAP Growth, and Craig says, “We were very happy with the correlation we saw.”

Benefits beyond alignment

In addition to goal setting, Rensselaer educators are realizing other instructional benefits of MAP Growth data. They use the learning continuum within MAP Growth and IXL Learning to connect their scores to classroom work. As Feagans notes, the results provide teachers with specific skill needs for each student. “The more I work with MAP Growth, what I love about it is that it gives the kids actual things we need to work on. It’s not just a score.”

Craig agrees, particularly with students who are doing well. He says, “Our third-grade teacher has students doing well overall in math. But in getting their math results from MAP Growth, it had sub-categories where they were not doing well. It really helped her focus some of her efforts.”

Re-Introducing MAP Growth

In an unusual twist, Rensselaer had used MAP Growth in the past. Craig notes they liked the longitudinal data, but teachers struggled to use the information for instructional planning. “Then we went to Renaissance, but it only said if students could pass the test,” Craig explains.

For Feagans, the revamped Learning Continuum Class Report for MAP Growth was the key. “It’s our go-to report. It really broke down each standard and connected it to IXL skills. That really helped us. With STAR and Acuity, it was just *‘this is where you’re at’*—not specifically telling you what to do next.”

Excited about the potential—but wary of initiative fatigue—Craig planned a thoughtful reintroduction of MAP Growth. The Rensselaer team asked teachers to volunteer to try MAP Growth so they could evaluate it for themselves. Feagans notes, “Our eighth-grade teachers jumped on board, gave three assessments last year, and it was great data for us. Teachers enjoyed the data so much that we saw our whole school corporation going to NWEA.”

After their spring testing pilot and professional learning workshops using actual MAP Growth data this summer, Rensselaer educators feel confident about testing corporation-wide in the new school year. As Craig says, “We are not just adding things to teachers’ plates. If anything, we’re taking things off their plates and making their lives easier.”



District snapshot

RENSELAER, IN



PRE-K-12 STUDENTS

1,600

ECONOMIC MARKERS

48%

OF STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

PRODUCT USE

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH AND MAP SKILLS IN

2017



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