Georgia Leadership Preparatory Academy, GA

Award-winning school improved pedagogy with MAP Growth

When Dr. Tonya Williams set out to improve the assessment program for the Georgia Leadership Preparatory Academy, she knew she had to develop a strategy that respected her teachers' time. "Students need and want to grow," she explains, "and that happens through improved teacher pedagogy. But to make that a reality, you have to give teachers the time to do it."

Williams' aim was to support students by developing a culture of data among students and teachers. More than just getting access to instructionally informative data in real time, she wanted to make growth data part of the school's DNA. "I knew that it would be critical for teachers to be able to support and help each other, so Professional Learning opportunities also played a big role in our plans."

Pinpointing gaps and empowering students and families

Williams started by working with teachers to use student data from MAP® Growth™ to solve the most pressing issues— beginning with engaging students and their families.

Amanda Whittington, seventh grade ELA teacher, explains: "In my previous job, I didn't get insights into what the clear gaps in my classroom were, so it was a challenge to set growth goals or measure growth appropriately."

That created a hurdle in the classroom, and a setback for students and families; without a clear indication of what the student's ready to learn next, it was difficult to involve them.

"Then we started using the Learning continuum, and it pinpointed right away where each student was," she says, "and we started using the data for involving students

and families with setting growth goals." Whittington then took her MAP Growth data and created a custom form for conferences that presented the data about kids alongside her observations and other key information from her classroom. "When I started giving my kids ownership of their growth, and when I involved families, all of a sudden we were a team, supporting a student that was excited to see tangible results of their work."

Predicting student performance for the Georgia Milestones Assessment

For eighth grade ELA teacher Devin Latham, MAP Growth projections are a key part of why she's bought-in to the school's assessment program.

"My first year, I wasn't aware of how to use the data," she says. "Then we started using reports that showed both student performance and projections, and comparisons to other students. That made a big difference for helping my students prepare for the Georgia Milestones Assessment."

Equipped with data from both the Student Profile report as well as the Achievement Status and Growth report, Latham worked with her students to create data binders— notebooks that tracked their reading progress, alongside their projected performance, and what they could work on to improve. Students used them to guide their work in reading, confident that their efforts would have a direct impact on their own growth.

They also shared the data binders with their families, which helped facilitate communication. "It really helped to be able to show how a student's growth compared to similar students nationally," she explains. "It put each

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student's performance in context, and it removed any surprises from how the Milestones test was going to go."

It also brought about something Latham didn't expect: it motivated her highest-performing students. "The summary quadrant of the Achievement Status and Growth report is a big deal to students who are used to being top performers. It shows them that even if they've mastered topics that their peers may be working on, they still have the opportunity to challenge themselves and grow. It was an incredible motivator."

Creating a data support system

"Part of this work was for teachers to be able to support and help each other," Williams says, because she knew that as more teachers worked together with data, they would begin to see powerful benefits outside of their own practices. One of the ways they went about it: giving all of a student's teachers access to their MAP Growth reading data.

For fifth grade mathematics teacher Inshira Martin, that was a game-changer. "Math teachers use Lexile® scores too!" she explains. "Reading comprehension has a big impact on math scores, and as I started to understand my students' reading abilities, I was able to understand where a reading difficulty might be holding a student back in my class."

She also used historical reports to better understand where each student was coming from. By revisiting reports from prior years, she was able to see where a student struggled in the past, and potentially identify skills and concepts from previous years to revisit. It also allowed her to work with other teachers to support her students, so they could take a coordinated approach to support the literacy skills that are crucial in each of their classrooms.

Conclusion

After their first year with their new MAP Growth program, teachers are more connected than ever, and using data together to affect change in their classroom. In addition to the growth they're seeing, they've also taken big strides toward establishing their culture of data: Williams regularly holds feedback sessions, where teachers can collaborate and surface concerns. They've involved students and their families in their growth journeys, and established the practices and habits to help them continue to do that for years to come.

Their efforts have been recognized throughout the state: in February 2019, they received the Georgia Charter School of the Year Innovation Award.

And perhaps best of all, the educators at Georgia Leadership Preparatory Academy are doing all of this while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. "A big part of my role is giving the teachers time back—to reduce time-consuming work and optimize the efforts that are most effective. It's all about respecting their schedules!"