

Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of New York



How the Archdiocese of New York raised state test scores four years in a row

“If I’m sitting next to somebody on the bus, I tell them I teach teachers,” says Susan Miller, associate superintendent of curriculum and staff development for the Archdiocese of New York. Since 2017, her focus has been on ensuring every teacher in the archdiocese feels confident their instruction is helping students grow. “My role is really around excellence in education,” Susan explains.

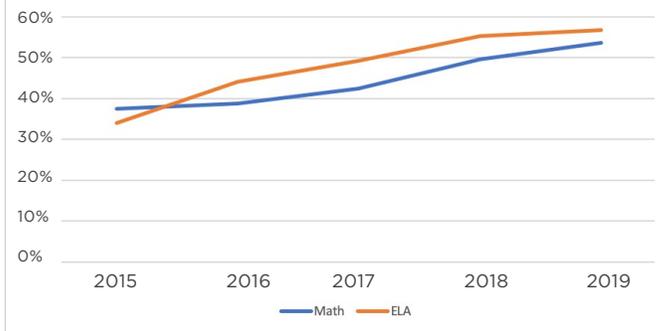
But when Susan joined the archdiocese in 2017, New York state scores were “kind of a mystery,” she admits. And there was room for improvement. So Susan took up the detective work her predecessor had started the year before. Her hard work took a lot of outside-the-box thinking, and it’s definitely paid off.

Seeing clearly with data

The archdiocese piloted MAP® Growth™ with 14 schools during the 2016-17 school year and went all in with the remaining schools for 2017-18. “After using MAP Growth, we were able to predict our state scores and were dead on,” Susan says.

That was a turning point for the archdiocese, the proof they needed to believe data could help them improve student achievement and growth. Assessment results have been improving since.

Percent of Archdiocese of New York Students meeting or exceeding state proficiency standards in math and ELA



The role of professional development

Susan knew it would take more than a rigorous curriculum and assessment data to achieve excellence, though. All educators would need professional development to be able to truly connect the two.

Susan’s teaching of teachers wasn’t without trial and error. Initial training unintentionally kept principals out of the loop. To find ways to bring them into the conversation, Susan reached out to her partner at NWEA®, Jessica Knierim. “She was instrumental in really thinking through ‘How do we do this?’ ‘What are other schools doing?’ ‘How could we make this work?’”

Together they decided starting at the highest levels of administration was ideal. With more than 130 schools in the archdiocese, the task of aligning leadership can be complex. So they began by training regional superintendents on how to use data and had NWEA facilitators guide talks on how to set goals for principals. Principals, in turn, became in charge of training their own teachers.

Working with teachers

Professional development for teachers was, first and foremost, focused on the effectiveness of instruction, not on subjective ideas about what it means to be a good or bad teacher. Digging deep into data was the second fundamental piece, and one they are continuing to focus on.

“We do a lot of data analysis,” Susan says. “We look to see which students are growing, which aren’t, who we’re effective with, who we’re not effective with. And that drives how we’re doing our professional development.”

Data analysis begins with a bird’s eye view of every school. Susan and her team look at average proficiency and average growth, as measured by MAP Growth. They then look at every single class and determine whether growth is above NWEA norms, above the archdiocese average, or below both.

Then comes exploring student-level data. Seeing exactly how individual kids are performing makes it easier to explore teaching effectiveness—and create action plans. Another round of MAP Growth yields more data and answers the critical question: did the action plan work? Best practices are captured so that other teachers facing similar challenges can try the same thing. Action plans that don’t yield the desired results get revised until the instructional goals are met.

It takes a village

Documenting best teaching practices gives teachers access to effective teaching methods they can add to their teaching toolkit. It also led to changes in how the archdiocese approaches professional development, from providing more teacher coaches to having conference-type professional development days that give teachers more power to explore topics that would best inform their practice.

Working together for the children of the archdiocese was definitely a group effort, but Susan credits MAP Growth with proving that data can make it easier to identify problem areas—and begin the challenging work of tackling them. Susan also credits her teachers for doing the hardest work of all. “I have teachers who are really awesome, who are really willing to dig in and work with coaches and figure out ways to make it happen,” she says. “That’s where our success is coming from.”



District snapshot

ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK



K-8 SCHOOLS THAT USE MAP GROWTH

121

DEMOGRAPHICS

52%

OF STUDENTS ARE OF COLOR

ECONOMIC MARKERS

60%

OF STUDENTS LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

PRODUCT USE

PILOTED MAP GROWTH FOR K-8 IN

2016-17

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH FOR K-8 ARCHDIOCESE-WIDE IN

2017-18



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