

Distinctive Schools



Why teachers and students in this urban charter network can't stop talking about MAP Reading Fluency

Distinctive Schools educators in Chicago and metro Detroit couldn't afford to wait to build stronger readers.

Distinctive Schools is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and educational practice leader committed to social justice and the elevation of access and achievement in historically marginalized communities. The network, composed of eight schools serving primarily low-income students of color, has always aimed to help their nearly 3,500 students get—and stay—on track for high school and beyond.

To do that, they make reading a priority. But until recently, their reading assessment tool was administered one-on-one three times each school year, taking up to seven weeks of instructional time. Losing that time at the beginning of the school year was especially devastating, as it slowed down back-to-school momentum.

Team members at Distinctive Schools knew they had to make a change. They had the passion. They had the will and moral imperative. But they didn't have time or reliable data.

Seeing what's possible

After observing a class of students at a neighboring school take MAP® Reading Fluency™ and seeing the actionable data and reporting immediately available for teachers, the Distinctive team was sold. MAP Reading Fluency is an online, adaptive benchmark and progress monitoring assessment that efficiently measures oral reading fluency, literal comprehension, and foundational skills—for an entire class of both English and Spanish speakers—in just 20 minutes.

“While we weren't looking for a new assessment, we were frustrated with the amount of instructional time we were

losing with our current one-to-one administered test,” says Stephanie Cardella, Executive Director of Curriculum & Assessment for Distinctive Schools.

Select schools in the network started a MAP Reading Fluency pilot in the fall of 2018. Staff began by administering the test to small groups of students, but as teachers grew more comfortable, they expanded to include the entire class. With the success of the pilot, other schools in the network were invited to opt-in. After seeing the value of the data and the time savings, all Distinctive Schools adopted MAP Reading Fluency in 2019.

The right tool for the team

For teachers and coaches, the benefits of MAP Reading Fluency were immediate and impossible to ignore.

“MAP Reading Fluency [...] has the capability of identifying reading issues early because it really gives a good breakdown of where the gap is for this student. Is it in the actual reading or is it in some foundational skills?” says Aggie Sparrow, instructional coach. “And having the ability to go back and listen to a student after they've done the oral reading part is really wonderful because you get to listen to their actual performance and see the gap that might be showing in the data.”

MAP Reading Fluency goes beyond oral reading to provide a comprehensive view of student literacy. First grade teacher Margaret Igleski adds, “[One] thing I really like about the MAP Reading Fluency test is that all kids start with a pretest and then, based on that data, that either takes them to an oral reading fluency test, or they work on their foundational skills. So although they're all starting out the same, it kind of

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Melissa Feinberg, Assistant Director

Chicago International Charter School (CICS) Irving Park, IL

reaches kids where they are and gives them a chance to perform successfully on the test.”

School administrators have seen the impact, too, and have been using the reliable data to determine building-wide trends.

“We use assessment data to really help drive where our instruction is needed. It helps us in observations and with coaching of teachers to help develop them, so that our students are learning,” says Melissa Feinberg, Assistant Director for Chicago International Charter School (CICS) Irving Park, managed by Distinctive Schools. “As an administrator, [MAP Reading Fluency] gives me those tools to support our coaches, which support the instructional needs of teachers as well.”

Bringing it all together

In less than two years, students and teachers across the network have seen the impact of MAP Reading Fluency, and not just in the incredible time savings. The network has expanded testing to include grades K-5. Teachers regularly utilize the progress monitoring feature, and the Florida Center for Reading resources linked in MAP Reading Fluency are used for both small group and individual work. The assessment’s reliable, timely results, including automatically scored and reported foundational skills Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and instructional reading levels, have elevated planning and coaching conversations around the building. And the kids love it, too.

“Our students love MAP Reading Fluency. To them it is just so interactive,” Melissa says. “They think that the worm is just great, and it gives them time to interact and work on their own in a meaningful way.”

While MAP Reading Fluency on its own has been a game changer for Distinctive Schools, when combined with MAP® Growth™ and MAP® Skills™, educators have the tools and data they need to support students at every level.

“MAP Suite is really wonderful because you get to see the big picture of the student,” Aggie says. “We believe at Distinctive Schools that there’s much more to a student than just one data point.”

Distinctive Schools now has the tools, the time, and the trusted data to take this generation of scholars to new heights.



Network snapshot

**CHICAGO, IL
DETROIT, MI, METROPOLITAN AREA**



STUDENTS

3,400

ECONOMIC MARKERS

77%

OF STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR
FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

LEARNING NEEDS

24%

OF STUDENTS ARE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

PRODUCT USE

IMPLEMENTED MAP READING FLUENCY IN

2018

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