

Panhandle Independent School District, TX

A high-performing district uses data to aim even higher

The town motto, “people of pride and purpose,” is evident throughout Panhandle, Texas. In a town of 2,000, one-third of the population is school-age children, and all attend Panhandle elementary (pre-K-5), junior high (6-8), or high school. The Panhandle Panthers have a lot of school pride, which stems in large part from the Panhandle Independent School District’s academic rigor.

The district’s schools have consistently ranked among the highest-achieving in the state. And that status has skyrocketed since using MAP® Growth™ and MAP Growth K-2. In 2011, Panhandle Elementary School moved up 50 places in the state ranking system—out of 4,000 elementary schools—to become the 29th highest-rated elementary school in Texas.

The benefits of an adaptive assessment

With over 80% of their students meeting proficiency, educational leaders wanted to use MAP Growth data to illuminate the learning needs of their high-performing students and focus on enrichment activities. But then they began to explore the multiple benefits MAP Growth provides. Within two years the district expanded their MAP Growth use to cover four measurement needs.

1. A universal screener

“We’re a high-performing school,” says Superintendent Blair Brown. “But we found in our data that our Tier 1 students

were regressing back to the mean on the bell curve. We were doing a good job with the lower-performing students and the students on the bubble, but we weren’t doing a good job with our higher-performing students.”

Principal Doug Rawlins adds, “If all of your focus is on Tier 3 and that’s where 20% of your kids are, and 80% of your kids are on or above grade level, then your focus is wrong. So we began to pay attention to those high-achieving students.”

Panhandle began using MAP Growth and MAP Growth K-2 as a screener before classes started in August—to identify Gifted and Talented students and to begin enrichment as soon as the school year started.

2. To differentiate instruction for Tier 2 and 3 Students

In the process of screening and defining students’ tiers with MAP Growth, the district learned something new from their data. There were instructional needs to be addressed in all grade levels. “We were excited about the data we were getting. Because we know how to get those struggling kids up—we’re good at that. But using that breakdown of student performance data on MAP Growth reports was one of the best things we did. We could never do that before,” says Brown.

Panhandle now uses MAP Growth data for differentiated instruction, small group instruction, specific intent instruction, Tier 2 intervention, special education interventions, and tutoring for students performing below grade level. “MAP Growth has allowed us to focus on every student’s needs,” Rawlins says.

3. To complement digital learning tools

Having an assessment tool that measures performance and growth for each kid enabled the district to see the effectiveness of their digital learning platforms.

Today students spend 20-30 minutes every day on digital platforms that integrate with MAP Growth, including Study Island™ and Compass Odyssey®. Scores from MAP Growth—including detailed breakdowns of goal and sub-goal areas—are used as a guide for digital learning, so each student is working on their specific area of need.

“We love MAP Growth because it fits seamlessly,” says Brown. “It works with our digital platforms to create learning paths, and our teachers are really excited about this.”

4. To streamline testing

Before using MAP Growth, Panhandle used a multitude of different tests to ensure they didn’t miss a kid’s needs when screening. “To identify pre-reading and pre-primer needs of our early learners, we were using four different tests,” says Rawlins.

In past years, testing also required the hiring of many substitute teachers to facilitate testing sessions. But MAP Growth has eliminated that need. The district saves on the cost of administering tests, and teachers get back the instructional time lost to multiple testing sessions.

“Because of MAP Growth, we are beginning to scale back on the number of tests we give,” says Rawlins.

Making 100% proficiency and moving forward

With their spring 2014 state assessment behind them, Panhandle Panthers have a new source of pride: for the first time, 100% of the students in fifth grade are proficient in math and reading.

“It takes good principals,” says Brown. “It takes great teachers. And we’re fortunate here to have good kids.” He adds, “We are still learning about all the things MAP Growth can do for us, but our teachers have bought in and they love it.”



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District Snapshot

PANHANDLE, TX



K-12 STUDENTS

687

PRODUCT USE

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH AND
MAP GROWTH K-2 IN

2011

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