

Novi Community School District, MI



A high-achieving district recommits to high-quality assessment practices

After first implementing MAP® Growth™ computer adaptive assessments in 2004, Novi Community School District's engagement with MAP Growth ebbed and flowed for several years. The K-12 district drifted away from using MAP Growth as intended—throughout the school year—and instead tested students annually. By the time R.J. Webber joined the district in 2010 as assistant superintendent of academic services, use of MAP Growth data to inform instructional and programmatic decisions was haphazard.

As a strong advocate for balanced assessment systems, Webber saw the potential for real-time MAP Growth data to benefit all the district's students, including its high-achieving majority. The district has two key goals: high achievement for all students and ensuring student growth each year. "MAP Growth demonstrates how you can make assessment a common experience by focusing on measuring and tracking student growth," Webber notes.

A Culture Where MAP Growth Data Is a Must-Have

As part of his efforts to bring a coordinated assessment system to Novi, Webber brought Nick Kalakailo* on board as director of student growth and accountability. "Assessment is about connecting the dots when we're

challenged," states Kalakailo. "We find out what we know and what we don't know about our students' learning, and it allows us to see the next steps."

The district's commitment to a balanced assessment program has helped them prepare students for rigorous new college and career readiness standards. After spending four years creating a K-12 curriculum fully aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), district teachers use MAP Growth data to help uncover each student's learning gaps and adjust instruction. Says Webber, "NWEA® believes MAP Growth is a way versus the single answer for a school or district."

Kalakailo concurs. "It's not about using MAP Growth hundreds of times per year; it's not about us using any of our other assessments in a way that's test-test-test. It's about taking time to get some results, let kids reach, take a challenge—and MAP Growth always presents the right challenge for each student."

TIPS FOR USING MAP GROWTH MORE EFFECTIVELY:

1. Promote or hire the right people.

“Rather than going for traditional curriculum coordinators in math or ELA, we made a bet that what we needed was to get our instructional data house in order and better serve our English language learners,” says Webber.

2. Refine your assessment plan—and get leadership approval.

Novi was only using MAP Growth annually. Webber recalls, “I told leadership, ‘It’s not enough that we’re going to have a spring state assessment. We need some before and after snapshots of how kids are doing, and we need immediate results now.’” He received the green light to use MAP Growth twice a year.

3. Execute your plan consistently.

“After four years of recommitting to fall and spring MAP Growth testing cycles, teachers feel more confident about the test,” explains Kalakailo. “They’re able to understand the information they get and see how it’s actionable.”

4. Have a well-prepared test administration and use teachers as proctors.

Kalakailo feels strongly that assessment literacy starts with the assessment administrations. Understand that students respond positively to well-orchestrated environments. Says Kalakailo, “When I ask a teacher to be a better administrator of the assessment, it’s because I respect him or her as a professional. Teachers realize there is an art to assessment administration. No learning or assessment environment is ever perfect, but having teachers who are intentional about their own assessment practices helps account for expected imperfection.”

5. Create ways to have data conversations.

Webber and Kalakailo stress that a balanced assessment system involves continually monitoring how data get discussed at the individual student and programmatic level. Because using MAP Growth year-over-year creates a data-rich, longitudinal history for every student, Novi educators have more nuanced conversations about acceleration and intervention.

Moving through challenges toward cohesion

In reflecting on the district’s many changes since they overhauled their curriculum and assessment protocol, Webber states candidly, “We’ve had both struggle and growth.” He praises his teachers for working “exceptionally hard” to help align the district curriculum to CCSS, and applauds the growing understanding that a systemic approach to data allows educators to shift direction quickly. “MAP Growth gives us actionable data, data that helps us do what we say we want to be doing for our kids,” he states.

*In 2015, Nick Kalakailo left Novi Community School District to join NWEA as an Account Executive. He currently partners with schools in the Midwest.



District snapshot

GREATER DETROIT, MI



K-12 STUDENTS

6,200

LEARNING NEEDS

9%

OF STUDENTS ARE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LEARNERS

5%

OF STUDENTS ARE
JAPANESE NATIONALS
LEARNERS

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

98%

GRADUATION RATE

95%

OF STUDENTS ARE
COLLEGE-BOUND

PRODUCT USE

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH IN

2004

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH K-2 IN

2008

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