

Driven by Data: 100% Academic Growth for Every Child 1

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Abstract

Teachers often say, I've taught the lesson. The question is have the students, learned the content? How do you know if your students are actually growing academically while in your class? Shouldn't all students have growth? Some teachers say, I have so many different levels in my class it's hard to ensure that all of them are learning something and maintain my pace. Allow data to help guide your instructional practices. Northwest Education Association's (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) enables teachers to see where their students are in comparison to the National Norms and strive to ensure that 100% of their students show academic growth. Teachers, Parents, Students and Administrators can partner up to ensure student academic growth via data teams, goal settings and collaboration. Be able to prove that there is effective teaching in your classroom.

Keywords: Data Driven, Assessments, Growth Mindset, Teacher planning, MAP, Measure of Academic Progress

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Statement of Problem

Teaching and Learning is a dynamic process in which both the student and the teacher engages in. Curriculum is dense and attention of students has to be captured with levels of creativity. Teachers are required to deliver large bodies of knowledge to students are varying multiple levels while in a classroom with limited amounts of time. Scheduling, field trips, standardized testing, special guest speakers, lunch, recess, and all the other things that happen in a school day often interview with the continuity of instruction. As a result, lesson plans are altered and adjusted, scope and sequence of curricula may not be followed, and typically nor is there a real sense of accountability either in the public or private sectors of education. The real question is, if the teachers have taught/communicated the information, does that mean that students have learned/retained it? Students must learn and have accountability to what they are learning. Administrators and Teachers need a more forgiving method to gauge student achievement versus the finality of a standardized test. These tools need to be used on an incremental basis to really understand how students are acquiring and retaining information. Without these measures, we do a disservice to students and parents regarding their educational experiences.

Literature Review

The data team process is used for improving student achievement for all students: remedial or high functioning. This process allows educators to progress students from their level to their next level. The comparison is with themselves alone and not with other students. This builds intrinsic motivation with students.

Anderson (2010) states that a school system must create a culture within their staff in identifying achievement for every student with tangible results. She defines culture to be thoughts and beliefs shared by a group of people. Teachers believe that educating children needs a level of compassion, dedication, and commitment not only to teaching put the sheer act of planning to teach. Teachers feel like the “stars have aligned if we are able to plan lessons a few days in advance, if [their] grades are current in the grade book, and if all the required reports are turned in” (Anderson, 2010).

Therefore, carving time to meet collaboratively to discuss individual student progress seems cumbersome and places demands on time that educators feel that they do not have. However, the power of data teams has proven great results with regards to improving student achievement (Wiggins, McTighe, 2011)

Data Teams is a concept that was created by the Leadership and Learning Center in 2001. A group of teachers (either vertically or horizontally) collect and chart data, identify gaps and strengths, establish goals (set, review and revise), and select instructional strategies and the cycle continues. Effective data teams meet at least once a month between 90-120 minutes (Martins, 2009).

“In the context of schools, the essence of holistic accountability is that we must consider not only the effect variable—test scores—but also the cause variables—the indicators in teaching curriculum the

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indicators in teaching, curriculum, parental involvement, leadership decisions, and a host of other factors that influence student achievement” (D. Reeves,2004).

Teachers must see which strategy of teaching is yielding the most effect when it comes to students progress. Students establishing their own goals to gain a personal best is the target behavior and that yearning for continuous achievement is then cultivated.

Northwest Education Association (NWEA) provides a common assessment that educators have access to. Measure of Academic Progress or better referred to as MAP assessments provide a standards based assessment for teachers and administrator to collect the needed data on various subject areas. Teachers across grade levels and disciplines can meet to discuss the progress of their students based on a child’s MAP results.

Methods

Scheduling plays an important part of any school day. With the hustle and bustle of day to day events and activities finding common planning time may be near impossible unless it is deliberately planned for. Administrators must create and develop school schedules that allow for both horizontal planning and vertical planning meetings to take place. Dedicating time during staff meetings or professional development days helps. Having expectations for teachers to take time before or after school, during their lunch or during breaks will not yield consistent results or dedication to the conversation at hand (Anderson, 2010).

There are seven questions that must be answered in any successful data team. Designing templates and with Data Teams in mind proves to be helpful documentation for later reference. The following are the seven questions Anderson (2010) states needs to be answered in every Data Team:

1. What are the students doing well?
2. What are the students not doing well?
3. What is the specific plan to address the areas in which the students are not doing well?
4. In addition, what is the specific plan to address the needs of the students who are already proficient?
5. What is the evidence that the strategy is being taught (adult actions)?
6. What is the evidence that the strategy is working (student outcomes)?
7. What is the date by which the effectiveness of the strategy will be assessed?

Our teaching is not as effective at times, not because we don’t want to be, but maybe due to the students we have do not learn from the strategy we put forth. By establishing what works via data teams, we can eliminate strategies that have not proven to be effectively raising student achievement with those that are or would.

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Recommendations of Practical Implementation

MAP is an assessment readily available to teachers both in the public schools and private schools. MAP may be customized to State level standards and/or the Common Core Standards. In either scenario, MAP collects and analyzes data from North America and can on an international level as well.

By using MAP, teachers and administrators are able to assess student proficiency as compared to not only themselves from test window but also across the continent. MAP provides longitudinal data for the number of years a student has been taking an assessment as it relates to their own personal growth over time. Additionally, it provides a comparison between districts and National Norms.

A RIT (Rasch Unit) score is determined when students complete the computer based assessment. Depending on the RIT, MAP provides a detailed report on Norm Averages, how the RIT correlates with State Standardized assessments (if available), projections for the ACT (SAT coming soon) based on the RIT and percentile.

This tool is invaluable for teachers as NWEA provides a breakdown analysis of strands within disciplines and where students and teacher's instruction needs to focus on. Not to mention, based on RIT teachers are able to create homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings for small group instruction and centers. Lexile levels are provided for literacy to gauge the level of readers for students to pick books. Librarians, teachers across grade levels and disciplines, and specialists can all benefit from the lexile levels as reading is essential across disciplines.

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