

Littlestown Area School District, PA



A little Pennsylvania district makes big gains using reliable, actionable data

Tucked away in south-central Pennsylvania, a stone's throw from the Maryland border, sits Littlestown, Pennsylvania. The quiet bedroom community is, well, little.

“The name kind of describes it,” says Dr. Chip Fissel, principal at Alloway Creek Elementary School. “We’re about 45 minutes north of Baltimore, about 45 minutes south of Harrisburg, and major highways are local.”

Dotting the hamlet are the three buildings that make up the Littlestown Area School District—an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school—which support the nearly 2,000 K-12 students who live in the region. But even with only three buildings in the entire district, inconsistencies in assessment across classrooms, grades, and schools proved to be a problem—and the impact was felt at every level.

In search of a better way

Teachers were relying on handmade benchmark assessments or cobbling tests together from different sources to find data they could trust to drive teaching and learning—a pursuit that was time consuming and, ultimately, ineffective.

“A lot of times [...] we would do something in the elementary school, and when [students] went to the middle school, [teachers] reinvented the wheel when they

were looking for some data,” Dr. Fissel says. Middle school educators in particular didn’t have the right tools to support students in their learning. “[T]here wasn’t really any way to pinpoint deficits or strengths.”

Empowered by new Superintendent Christopher Bigger, who put forth a vision for success at every level and for all students in Littlestown, educators and administrators took a different approach to assessment and data—and it started with MAP® Growth™.

Going all in

MAP Growth solved a few problems right away. Immediately, teachers saved valuable time and resources by using an existing, computer-adaptive assessment. Its consistent scale made it easy to track individual student progress from season to season and year to year. As students transitioned to middle and high school, MAP Growth was also flexible enough to go with them, providing individual growth measures and quantifiable data their teachers didn’t have before.

Littlestown teachers who were skeptical about the quality of the data they received from other assessments were drawn to the research-backed, reliable, actionable data from MAP Growth. “We were looking for something that was, like, ‘No excuses,’ that we could totally rely on,” says Cortney Golden, assistant principal at Maple Avenue Middle School.

“Teachers now know where their students are and what skills or competencies they need to build, whether it’s on grade level or below grade level, or if we need to extend them and take them above grade level.”

Dr. Lori Stollar, Director of Curriculum and Innovation
Littlestown Area School District, Littlestown, PA

In their first year, instead of focusing solely on results, the district’s educators prioritized getting to know MAP Growth inside and out. They accomplished this with support from their NWEA professional learning consultant, Brooke Mabry, who’s been working closely with teachers and staff in the district for the last two and a half years. She began by showing the team ways to use their assessment data to make more informed instructional decisions and how to leverage tools like the learning continuum to improve classroom instruction.

“[M]y golly, we are so blessed to have Brooke,” Cortney says. “We have made it our mission to continue her work when she isn’t with us and have continued to dig in and learn things and try things.” Their commitment to assessment literacy paid off quickly when students exceeded almost every expectation. “That happened just as a natural byproduct of us using good data,” Cortney admits.

Big gains in Littlestown

As educator confidence and expertise in MAP Growth grew, so did positive student outcomes.

“Our administrators really have embraced that all students can learn and use that mindset to move teachers to differentiate, individualize, and personalize instruction for students,” says Dr. Lori Stollar, the district’s director of Curriculum and Innovation. “I see teachers using their data, and the learning continuum [...] and really doing guided grouping. Teachers now know where their students are and what skills or competencies they need to build, whether it’s on grade level or below grade level, or if we need to extend them and take them above grade level.”

Even with their impressive achievements, educators in Littlestown continue to set big goals for their students and district. “I don’t think we ever want to become complacent,” says Dr. Fissel. “We want to continue to grow.”



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District snapshot

LITTLESTOWN, PA



STUDENTS

1,952

ECONOMIC MARKERS

39%

ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

PRODUCT USE

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH IN

2017