



CASE STUDY | MEASURES OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our Lady of Hungary Catholic School, Indiana

School achieves double-digit growth with the help of interim and classroom formative assessment data

In 2014, South Bend's Our Lady of Hungary Catholic School welcomed its third principal in four years: Kevin Goralczyk, an Indiana native and seasoned educator. Together with the parish's pastor, Reverend Kevin Bauman, Principal Goralczyk began exploring how OLH could raise its pre-K – 8 student achievement and better support teachers and staff serving a fast-changing school population. Both leaders looked for solutions aligned with their school's "Excellence for Everyone" mantra, which led them to partner with Northwest Evaluation Association™ (NWEA™).

Goralczyk notes that OLH faced educators' universal challenge: "You know what you need the kids to know, but how do you know that they learned it? We didn't want to teach our kids for the minute to pass the test, we wanted to make sure that we had our kids learning from year-to-year and that their learning transferred across years."

Due to recent demographic shifts, 40% of the school's K – 8 students now receive English Language Learner (ELL) services. "Today, our families are predominantly from rural Mexico, and many of our parents and grandparents didn't have the chance to finish primary school. We needed to address more basic general knowledge issues with our students than in the past," shares Bauman. Before they could elevate all students' learning, though, Goralczyk knew the school's professional development (PD) would require what he calls a "paradigm shift" to establish and enable a strong professional learning community. "The traditional 'sit-and-get' model wasn't going to work," he underscores.

Refocusing on learning to keep all students growing

Bauman, a former University of Notre Dame educator, knew NWEA assessments had a solid track record in helping educators close achievement gaps and push high achievers; Goralczyk found the organization's professional development well-suited to helping the school become a more collaborative and academically successful community.

They received support for their efforts from Marsha Jordan, superintendent of schools for the Diocese

of Fort Wayne-South Bend. As a school without financial means, however, Goralczyk reveals that acquiring the "very affordable per student and per teacher" assessments and PD required a creative, all-in approach: holding raffles and seeking community donations. "The commitment to making this happen was very inspiring," he affirms. Raising the funds meant "the kids knew what they were getting" and also helped teachers buy into the importance of the change.

The school saw significant changes during their first year using Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) interim assessments, Children's Progress Academic Assessment™ (CPAA™) early learning skills assessment, and NWEA professional development focused on classroom formative assessment strategies. Student growth accelerated, teachers' skills strengthened, and students become more engaged with their personal learning journeys.

School Snapshot

Student population: Serves ~ 200 pre-K – 8 students; 80% of K – 8 students are Latino, with 40% receiving English Language Learner (ELL) services

Location: South Bend, Indiana

Economic markers: 100% free or reduced lunch

Product use: Implemented K – 12 MAP, pre-K – 3 CPAA, and NWEA formative assessment solutions in fall 2014



Middle school English teacher Melissa Wroblewski recalls the school's first fall MAP test. "We anticipated classes being below the test's national norms. Some were slightly below, a lot of others way below. But as the year went on, the kids became more invested and the teachers became more invested and changed up their teaching practices." By spring, everyone's MAP scores grew. "To go from starting the year behind to showing double-digit growth was amazing—a great thing to celebrate," Wroblewski says.

Because MAP provides immediate information about student learning, OLH analyzed their fall data and made strategic shifts aimed at improving every student's academic growth, including:

- initiating after-school tutoring for ELL students and students in its lowest-achieving classes
- putting NWEA PD small-group modules on hold until the winter in order to review OLH curriculum/standards
- developing a summer 2015 program for low-achieving pre-K – 8 students

Maximizing MAP data by recommitting to formative assessment yields positive results

Despite best efforts, observation plus highly variable winter MAP test results made it clear OLH teachers' comfort level with the new tools and strategies varied. While some classrooms were making large gains in student growth, others were not. Goralczyk called for teachers to renew their collaborative formative assessment PD practice, then stepped back. "I think the biggest mistake most administrators make is thinking they have to lead in everything. You have to trust your staff," he emphasizes. "You have to lay the framework for what the change would be, then you identify your leaders in the building—your master teachers. They help you empower everyone else."

Kari Wuszke, whose OLH teaching experience includes fifth graders and ELL students, emerged as one such leader. "You can have all the data in the world. But if you don't know how to navigate it and what to do with it, then who cares?" muses Wuszke. "Being given the tool of formative assessment and different ways to use it was my lifesaver."

By using her new formative skills in combination with MAP data, Wuszke gained better day-to-day understanding of her students' learning, and tailored her instruction to reflect that knowledge. She explains, "A couple of kids in my class were on the low end in reading, language usage, and math. But I didn't realize how low they were until we got our MAP data." She used MAP reports to identify the skills students were struggling to learn, then selected formative assessment strategies to use with those students. "The light bulb went off. I could do this to help all students, including those at the higher end." The shift enabled her to see "better and better evidence of growth."

Wroblewski's journey echoes much of Wuszke's. The uptick in students' smiles, engagement, and growth reinforced her decision to use data-informed instruction—especially as implementing formative assessment strategies proved easier than expected. "It's not like you're spending oodles of time outside the classroom. And you get so much good feedback from the students that you can use in the moment to change up lesson plans on the fly. It helps you create the vision for the next couple of days, the week, or even the rest of the quarter."

She elaborates on the effects the "positive, upbeat" formative assessment PD has had on students. "From classroom to classroom, the kids get the same exposure to materials and techniques, and they're loving it and moving forward."

Spring 2015 MAP results echoed the growth teachers were seeing. All classes improved their mean MAP score in all three test areas; additionally, four out of nine classrooms ended the year with scores above the average MAP norms in reading and language usage.

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— Kari Wuszke, Teacher, Our Lady of Hungary Catholic School, South Bend, Indiana



Creating a culture where students and educators flourish

Goralczyk credits the team’s ongoing PD for helping them persevere to reach each student. “We ask, ‘What would a highly effective teacher do in this circumstance?’ Then we ask ourselves if we’re zeroing in on those things to make a difference.”

Leadership’s decision to invest in NWEA professional development has “energized” teachers, says Wuszke. “We feel entrusted as well as emboldened to do what we do—what God has called us to do. And it’s really been a special thing for us.”

The school’s changes have not gone without notice. Superintendent Jordan appreciates that under Goralczyk’s strong leadership, OLH teachers and students have gained deserved confidence in their own abilities. “I applaud the administration and faculty of Our Lady of Hungary for embracing NWEA and MAP as a means of tracking student achievement and growth, and then adjusting instruction and interventions to meet the needs of their students. I could not be more proud of their academic progress and the example that the faculty is providing to other schools both within and outside the diocese.”

As the school’s spiritual leader, Bauman sees OLH’s efforts making a difference at both the individual level and in terms of educational equality and social justice. “NWEA has helped so much in terms of what we’re able to do

daily in the classrooms,” he relates. “Many of our parents were pulled out of school to work in the fields in second or third grade. It touches us—literally to the level of the heart—to see them with tears running down their faces because they’re so proud of their children’s progress.”

With Year 2 of MAP testing and NWEA PD underway—and 2015 state summative assessment data still to arrive—OLH has chosen to support teachers by:

- hiring an ELL teacher
- assigning mentor teachers to both new teachers and teachers who need more guidance
- continuing with NWEA PD focused on classroom formative assessment practice
- building in time for the staff to collaborate

Bauman reflects on how the parish’s history of openness continues to reward those who participate in its journey. “Our Lady of Hungary has always been a place where we cross borders: linguistic, cultural, ways of seeing the world, and more. The face of our community has changed since we were founded in 1916, but we’re still in direct service to the immigrant poor through our church and school. The gospel shows us that Jesus meets people where they are, and NWEA tools help us focus on each student and bridge differences with families. It’s a partnership that’s helping us better prepare our students for the 21st century.”

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— Fr. Kevin Bauman, Pastor, Our Lady of Hungary Catholic School, South Bend, Indiana

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