

Our Lady of Hungary Catholic School, IN



From Below Norms to Above Average—and Still Growing!

Our Lady of Hungary Catholic School (OLH) principal Kevin Goralczyk and the parish's pastor, Reverend Kevin Bauman, 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 to pass a test; we wanted to make sure that we had our kids learning from year to year, and that their learning transferred across years," as Goralczyk notes.

Due to recent demographic shifts, 40% of the school's K-8 students now receive English Language Learner (ELL) services. "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 learning (PL) 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 already knew NWEA™ assessments had a solid track record in helping educators close achievement gaps and push high achievers; Goralczyk found the organization's PL well-suited to helping the school become a more collaborative and academically successful community. The school saw significant changes during

their first year using MAP® Growth™ and Children's Progress Academic Assessment™ (CPAA™), an early learning skills assessment, as well as NWEA PL focused on classroom formative assessment strategies. Student growth accelerated, teachers' skills strengthened, and students became more engaged with their personal learning journeys.

Middle school English teacher Melissa Wroblewski recalls the school's first fall MAP Growth 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." Because MAP Growth provides immediate information about student learning, OLH could analyze fall data to determine strategic shifts that could improve every student's academic growth, including targeted tutoring and a summer program for ELL students and those in the lowest-achieving classes. By spring, everyone's MAP Growth scores grew, and the school was on track for further growth the next year.

Supporting Teachers Drives Student Growth

Despite their best efforts, observation plus highly variable winter MAP Growth test results made it clear that 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 formative assessment PL practice, then stepped back. "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 emerged as one such teacher-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."

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By using new formative skills in combination with MAP Growth 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 Growth data." She used MAP Growth 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," and she shared her insights with other teachers to lift up all the school's students.

The school's dedication to data-driven instruction and PL paid off. By the end of their second school year using MAP Growth, teachers were seeing growth reflected in the scores, as well as every day in the classroom. All classes improved their mean MAP Growth score in all three test areas; additionally, four out of nine classrooms ended the year with scores above the average MAP Growth norms in reading and language usage. Goralczyk credits the team's ongoing PL for helping them 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 PL 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."



School Snapshot

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

SOUTH BEND, IN



PRE-K-8TH GRADE STUDENTS

200

LEARNING NEEDS

40%

OF STUDENTS
ARE ENGLISH
LEARNERS

80%

OF STUDENTS
ARE LATINO

ECONOMIC MARKERS

100%

OF STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR
FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

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