

Poway Unified School District



Large and diverse California district individualizes learning for every student

Poway Unified School District (PUSD) is located in northern San Diego County and operates 25 elementary schools, six middle schools, four comprehensive high schools, and one continuation high school. The district serves approximately 33,000 students.

Their vision at Poway is that all students will graduate ready for college. With a strong focus on rigor, relevance, and relationships, Poway ensures that every student is engaged in meaningful work appropriate for their level.

A major component of the district's vision is the teachers' ability to individualize instruction for every student. Poway does so with the help of NWEA® and its MAP® Suite of assessments.

Challenges for Poway

A partner of NWEA since 1998, all Poway elementary and middle school students in grades 2-8 take MAP® Growth™ three times per year in language usage, reading, and math. One Poway elementary school also uses MAP Growth Science, and 16 use MAP Growth K-2 for their early learners.

But getting to a point where so many of Poway's students are benefiting from the MAP Growth assessment didn't happen overnight. Linda Foote, Instructional Technology Specialist at PUSD, recalls spending time educating teachers about the benefits of using MAP Growth. In the beginning, some high-performing schools were resistant

to the new approach. Foote explains that those educators felt their students were already doing well and didn't need a new assessment. PUSD Title 1 schools, on the other hand, welcomed MAP Growth and understood the ways their students would benefit from the data.

"Before using MAP Growth," says Foote, "we were missing the full picture of how to teach kids who were gifted and talented, or struggling to learn, or were English Language Learners."

Individualizing instruction

A Poway team created a training program to familiarize all teachers with the administration of MAP Growth assessments, and Foote attended an NWEA professional learning workshop on differentiated instruction using MAP Growth data. After that, Foote helped to create a program for Poway teachers to understand the valuable data they get from MAP Growth and how they can use the data in the classroom.

Foote now offers day-long professional growth courses on the use of MAP Growth data to improve student learning. Poway also offers a MAP Growth "best practices" course, and Foote manages a central online hub for MAP Growth content, where she and other educators post best practices, lesson plans, teacher resources, and more.

Kids "outside the bubble"

Many districts, schools, and teachers struggle to recognize

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Linda Foote, Instructional Technology Specialist
Poway Unified School District, CA

growth for students who fall “outside the bubble.” Foote describes one Poway student named Bruce, who was making excellent progress according to his MAP Growth scores; however, he was scoring below California’s proficiency level on the state test. Bruce’s teachers used his MAP Growth data to determine which interventions would most significantly support his growth, and then they diligently applied this information to his instruction. Within a year, Bruce was scoring in the proficiency range on his state tests.

One strategy Poway employs to help students like Bruce is to offer special instructional days in which students are grouped by their MAP Growth scores—these are called “RIT” days. Students with similar academic strengths and needs, based on their RIT scores, are grouped together to receive more one-on-one instruction.

“Our students love RIT days,” says Foote. “They really enjoy being surrounded by other students who are similar in terms of academic ability.”

Poway kindergarten teachers engage even the youngest learners in their own academic success. One teacher gives each kindergartner a folder, grouped by their RIT ranges, containing what each student is ready to learn next. She bases this information on their MAP Growth K-2 results. The students spend one hour per week working on their own academic goals. “They arrive at the door asking if they’ll be able to work on their personal goals for the day,” says Foote. “It’s astonishing.”

Growth for all

Thanks to PUSD’s focus on MAP Growth and MAP Growth data, every student in the district knows their academic goals and what they need to do to achieve them. “We weren’t expecting to see such consistent, major growth across the board,” says Foote. “But now that we know what our students are ready to learn, growth is inevitable—even for our gifted and talented and Title I students.”

And those teachers who initially felt their students didn’t need MAP Growth were often surprised. “One teacher was really surprised by her student’s score in a learning area,” says Foote. “MAP Growth uncovered a major area of learning for this girl that needed special attention. She was then able to re-work her instruction accordingly.”

The meaningful, individualized instruction that comes from implementing MAP Growth makes all the difference in the classroom—even high-performing students are challenged to keep growing academically. Using MAP Growth has truly strengthened Poway’s culture of college readiness.



District snapshot

SAN DIEGO, CA



NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN
GRADES K-12

36,000

PRODUCT USE

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH IN

1998

nwea

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