

Advanced Learning Academy, CA

Starting strong: 1.5 Years' worth of growth in a school's first year

Dr. Michelle Rodriguez, assistant superintendent for teaching and learning at Santa Ana Unified School District, faced a challenge: Open a new charter school that would act as a model of personalized learning for the entire district, and achieve one and a half years' worth of student growth in the first school year. In September 2015, the Advanced Learning Academy (ALA) opened its doors—and what happened next is a testament to the hard work of the educators involved and proof that quality assessment data is an invaluable tool in helping kids grow.

"I don't think we ever considered not using MAP® Growth™," shares Dr. Rodriguez. Since MAP Growth was already widely used in the district, Dr. Rodriguez knew that it could also serve as a common language when replicating the school's unique teaching approaches—like competency-based learning and project-based learning— in other schools.

What ALA is doing differently to achieve accelerated growth

Teachers use MAP Growth data to understand each student's needs, and then take immediate action by adjusting instruction and re-grouping students—so they're always getting the specific instruction they need to advance. With longitudinal data from MAP Growth— plus more granular skills mastery data from MAP® Skills™

and other formative measures—informing their flexible curriculum and instruction, the staff at ALA builds a personal pathway to success for each student. Teachers make sure students understand that growth is not just about increasing a number; it's about improving students' knowledge and skills, so they're performing at or even above grade level in all areas.

Using MAP Growth to inspire students and evaluate programs

ALA Principal Kimberly Garcia says she sees a lot of students who are proud of the gains they've made and feel more confident in their abilities. "I'm so glad that we have a growth measure for the students," Garcia shares. "I think it does so much for the students to just build their self-esteem and help them want to get to the next level."

ALA's fourth and sixth graders, in particular, had huge growth gains. And while fifth graders also made gains, they weren't as large in comparison. Having MAP Growth data helped ALA to objectively re-evaluate their programs to improve them for those fifth graders. "It helped us to really focus our instruction," says Garcia.

“We wanted to develop a coherent system where we could see student growth over an extended period with a continuous scale score. MAP Growth provides this—and it’s very rare anywhere else.”

Dr. Michelle Rodriguez, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
Santa Ana Unified School District, CA

Creating a Bright Future with Powerful Assessment Data

While MAP Growth assured teachers that they had achieved their impressive growth goal for the school year, it also gave them the confidence to shoot for an even higher goal the following year. ALA now believes they can achieve about two years’ growth in the next school year.

And since MAP Growth provides a continuous measure of growth over time, ALA can keep supporting students through their entire careers. This includes preparing all students for success in college and careers, which is ALA’s mission. Since the NWEA® mission is partnering to help all kids learn®, this partnership is a natural collaboration in using data to make a difference.



School Snapshot

CHARTER SCHOOL

SANTA ANA, CA



4-6TH GRADE STUDENTS

134

LEARNING NEEDS

65%

OF STUDENTS ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS

18%

ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

ECONOMIC MARKERS

82%

OF STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH



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