

Rio Rancho School District, NM

Strategic use of interim assessment data helps student achievement soar

In New Mexico's Rio Rancho school district, students and educators at Puesta del Sol Elementary take inspiration from Spirit the Eagle's ability to soar. The mascot, who presides over approximately 750 students and 100 staff members, embodies the vision and tenaciousness that lifted the suburban Albuquerque school from a disappointing state report card to its current heights of student achievement. The K-5 school credits much of its turnaround to more effective use of MAP® Growth™ assessment data—as well as increased partnership with NWEA®.

One person who's not surprised by the school's success is Happy Miller, executive director of Research, Assessment, Data and Accountability (RADA). Says Miller, "We're strong supporters of Puesta del Sol's efforts. Like them, we use our MAP Growth data in so many ways: placement decisions; identifying a need for special services; predictions of proficiency; and comparing our students' growth to national norms. MAP Growth is integral to their work and to what we do throughout the district."

Puesta del Sol Principal G. Bryan Garcia sums up the school's journey from near-failing to thriving. "I have a great staff, a dedicated and relentless staff. In January 2012, New Mexico graded us D-. Less than three years later, we received a B+. That wouldn't have happened without my team's active participation in our data conversations. They use their skills—plus things you can't teach, those intangibles—to help us provide a quality education to our students."

When the state's report card arrived midway through the 2011-12 school year, he shares that the school "turned over every single leaf in our system with reference to data." After instructional and leadership reflection, he challenged the staff to commit to two key initiatives:

- + data-informed instruction for every student
- + collective agreement about what makes a productive (and unproductive) learning environment

While a wide range of data shape the team's instructional and planning efforts, "MAP Growth data help us level the playing field. We've engaged teachers and students in the concept of growth as it relates to progress, rather than proficiency," says Garcia. "It doesn't matter if it's a student with a special need, a student who comes from a second language background, a student with a high proficiency level—wherever the student is achieving, we use MAP Growth data to design a specific action plan."

Moving Achievement Forward

The teachers find their increased ability to use MAP Growth data creates powerful momentum in the classroom. According to Diane Earnest, the school's instructional coach, "As soon as our teachers get their class lists in the fall, they immediately want to see how each student performed on spring MAP Growth instead

of waiting for fall MAP Growth testing. They want to walk in on day one and have a starting point.” Once fall MAP Growth testing occurs, the real-time scores help tailor teaching even more. Continues Earnest, “We use the Learning Continuum tool within MAP Growth to identify what pieces each student needs to work on. Then we can really start moving the students forward.”

Miller affirms her belief in Puesta del Sol’s switch to a more student-centric approach. “They moved away from looking only at group state assessment data in the ‘rearview mirror.’ Instead of saying, ‘Okay, overall which standards did we do well in?’ they now look at each student and ask, ‘What does a particular student need?’” “We went from 30,000 feet down to the ground-level view,” agrees Garcia.

Puesta del Sol’s six-phase data study process

1. Data orientation and coding
2. Data analysis
3. Identification of students for focus/need study
4. Focus/need study development
5. Instructional tools development
6. Sharing of best practices and identifying support needed

Empowering staff leads to empowering students

Garcia observes that MAP Growth data provide another critical service: getting students involved in their own education. “We show students what their areas of strength are, and seeing their areas of growth helps engage them. They have the opportunity to set goals tied to what they want to accomplish. They see how learning new skills helps them develop the building blocks for a great and successful future.”

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Puesta del Sol Elementary, NM

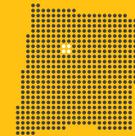


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District Snapshot

RIO RANCHO, NM



K-12TH GRADE STUDENTS

17,200

LEARNING NEEDS

3.4%

LF STUDENTS ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

ECONOMIC MARKERS

42%

OF STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

PRODUCT USE

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH IN

2003

IMPLEMENTED MAP GROWTH K-2 IN

2010