

Evidence of Excellence



Third-grade
English
proficiency
increases by

74%



TEACHER LORI HART AND A COLLEAGUE STRATEGIZE

MANISTEE AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS • MANISTEE, MICHIGAN



LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER

1,222 STUDENTS / 48.5% FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH / 13.6% SPECIAL NEEDS

85.8% WHITE / 4.5% HISPANIC OR LATINO / 4.2% MULTIRACIAL / 2.9% AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE / 1.7% BLACK / 0.7% ASIAN / 0.2% NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER

CHALLENGE

Before embracing the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at Work® process, Manistee Area Public Schools (MAPS) faced significant challenges, particularly concerning student assessment. Test scores revealed gaps in student mastery, indicating a lack of clarity in defining learning outcomes. The district recognized they weren't consistently meeting the needs of every student, every day, at every skill level.

Furthermore, secondary collaboration was fragmented. Teachers, often isolated in single-subject roles, lacked structured time for meaningful teamwork. While grade-level meetings occurred, they lacked focus and direction, leading to inconsistent practices. Recognizing the need for systemic change, superintendent Ronald Stoneman initiated a districtwide effort to adopt the PLC at Work process, aiming to transform their approach to teaching and learning.

IMPLEMENTATION

The transformation of MAPS to PLC at Work was deeply intertwined with a desire to enhance its assessment practices. This journey began in the 2019–2020 school year with a focus on building a strong foundation. Superintendent Stoneman and curriculum director Amber Kowatch had already fostered a collaborative culture, creating a guiding coalition to establish a shared mission and vision.

As a part of their PLC initiative, expert Geri Parscale presented the foundational understanding of PLC concepts for all staff. A core group of administrators and teachers then attended The Summit on PLC at Work in Phoenix, Arizona, in February, and upon returning, they launched a book study for *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at*

Work® by Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker. The district established “Late-Start Mondays” to provide dedicated time for collaborative teams to meet and delve into the book.

This focus on assessment became particularly crucial as they navigated the challenges of hybrid and virtual learning during the 2020 pandemic. As they navigated the return to school amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Manistee brought in PLC expert Dr. Anthony Muhammad to address the critical need for a strong, supportive school culture. Dr. Muhammad's message emphasized the importance of educators' roles in meeting students' needs, particularly during challenging times.

During the 2020–2021 school year, amidst the challenges of hybrid learning, Manistee finalized its essential standards and began preliminary discussions about assessment design. They adopted another book study, *Design in Five: Essential Phases to Create Engaging Assessment Practice* by Nicole Dimich, to guide their assessment refinement journey. The district also invested in professional development and coaching led by Angie Freese, who focused on formative and summative assessment strategies.

Additionally, they engaged in another book study, *Taking Action: A Handbook for RTI at Work*™ by Austin Buffum, Mike Mattos, and Janet Malone, using it to develop better support systems for challenging behaviors. This work helped them clarify specific strategies for addressing student needs and informed their approach to intervention within the PLC framework.

In the summer of 2022, Manistee focused on strengthening its intervention systems to support its assessment goals. They participated in the RTI at Work™ Coaching Academy and Yes We Can workshops and had professional development days led by Dr. Kristen












The PLC journey for us has been invaluable, focusing on the right work—our students. By growing teacher capacity and leveraging their expertise, we’re moving the student achievement needle while honoring our teachers as professionals. It’s truly awesome to see this become a part of who we are as a district.

AMBER KOWATCH / CURRICULUM DIRECTOR

Bordonaro. These efforts resulted in more robust Tier 2 intervention programs for students K–12, and assessments were used to identify students for interventions, monitor progress, and adjust support as needed.

MAPS also developed learning progressions, which were crucial in informing assessment design and ensuring that assessments accurately measured student growth toward essential learning targets. Data protocols were established to guide data analysis and decision making within collaborative teams. In the 2023–2024 school year, they began exploring extension activities, aiming to provide enrichment for all learners.

-  The Summit on PLC at Work®
-  PD with Geri Parscale
-  *Learning by Doing* book study
-  PD with Anthony Muhammad
-  *Design in Five* book study
-  PD with Angie Freese
-  *Taking Action* book study
-  RTI at Work™ Coaching Academy
-  Yes We Can! with Kristen Bordonaro

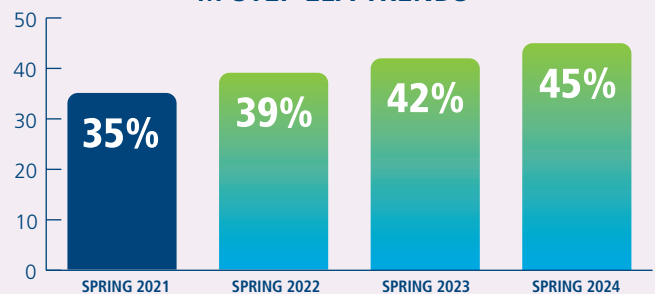
RESULTS

Through this ongoing journey of learning and collaboration, MAPS successfully integrated assessment as a core component of their PLC framework, resulting in a more data-driven and responsive learning environment for all students.

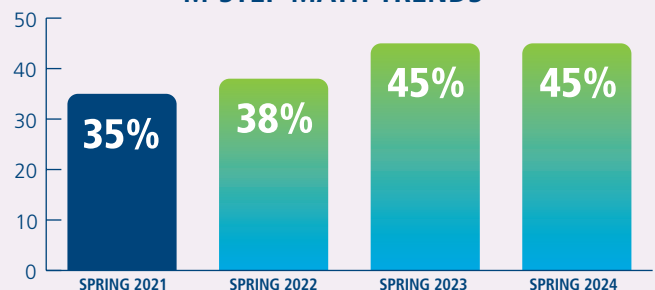
This transformation led to significant improvements in student achievement, including student proficiencies:

- **Kindergarten math:** Increased from 69% in 2020–2021 to 82% in 2023–2024
- **Third-grade English:** Increased from 26.20% proficiency in 2020–2021 to 45.70% in 2023–2024
- **Sixth-grade English:** Increased from 34.10% in 2020–2021 to 45.60% in 2023–2024

M-STEP ELA TRENDS



M-STEP MATH TRENDS



Start your success story



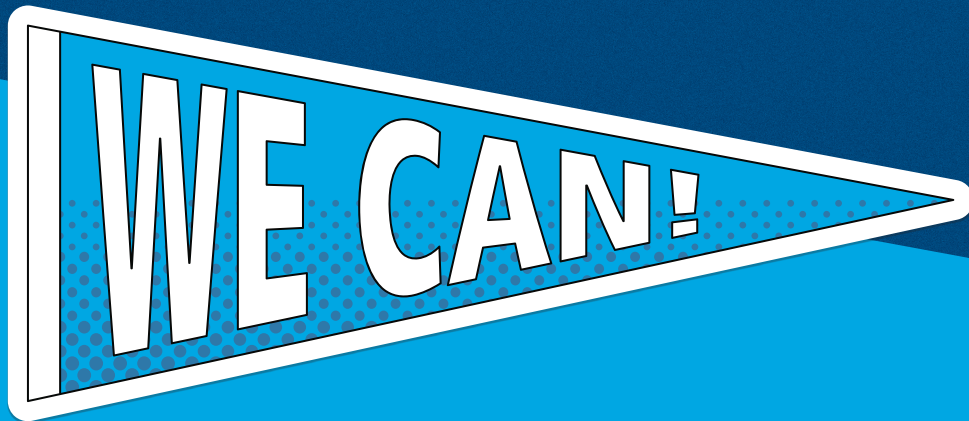
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LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER



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