

FAST™ Facilitates MTSS in North Saint Paul School District

Learn how FAST™ assessment data are being used to drive decision-making around instruction and intervention and, ultimately, improve student performance.

During the 2014-15 school year, the North Saint Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District underwent significant change.

What didn't change were the district's mission outcomes to ensure:

- All third-grade students are proficient readers;
- All eighth-grade students are proficient mathematicians;
- Achievement gaps are closed for all student groups.

"The district was facing another \$8 million in budget cuts, contributing to \$32 million in budget cuts over a number of years in a district with 10,000 students," explains Khriisslyn Goodman, Research, Evaluation and Assessment Coordinator. "There was major cost-cutting taking place, as well as personnel reductions."

The district required a method for measuring progress toward its academic goals that was quick, cost-effective and reliable. So, the district made the switch from Pearson AIMSweb and NWEA MAP to the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST™) from FastBridge Learning®. FAST not

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only cost less money per student without sacrificing data quality, but also takes up to 50 percent less time to administer compared to other assessments. As Goodman notes: "Teachers can spend more time teaching and less time testing."

This practical change to an assessment that saves time and money has now become an important component of the district's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and its educators' efforts to close achievement gaps and help all students succeed.



FAST Actionable Data

The district piloted FAST during the 2014-15 school year before rolling it out to all of its 14 elementary, middle and high schools the following fall. Now more than 8,000 students across the district complete FAST screening in the fall, winter and spring, and participate in frequent progress monitoring to measure growth toward reading and math goals.

The district has trained teachers to analyze and use FAST data to assess student progress toward grade-

level proficiency and make evidence-based decisions around instruction and intervention.

District administrators also conduct school-site visits throughout the year and host professional development opportunities to help build teachers' skills in reviewing and using FAST data.

"We are not using FAST

simply to predict which students will meet state standards, but to identify which students need support and where the learning gaps are," Goodman says. "Because they have the data, as well as training in how to use that data, teachers are able to work in teams to identify at-risk students and then further identify what students need in terms of skills and interventions."

FAST Effective Results

When educators put these analytical skills to practice and reviewed FAST data among kindergarten classes within the district, they uncovered a trend. The percent of students meeting or exceeding reading benchmarks in the winter was less than in the fall — when scores should have improved.

"We worked with our FAST data from fall and winter benchmarks, and our kindergarten teachers identified gaps, particularly in the area of phonics instruction," Goodman explains. Educators created a task force to determine how to close those gaps

and implemented a supplementary curriculum with a focus on phonics. Classes then participated in bi-weekly progress monitoring of letter sounds to determine if adjustments to Tier 1 instruction were effective.

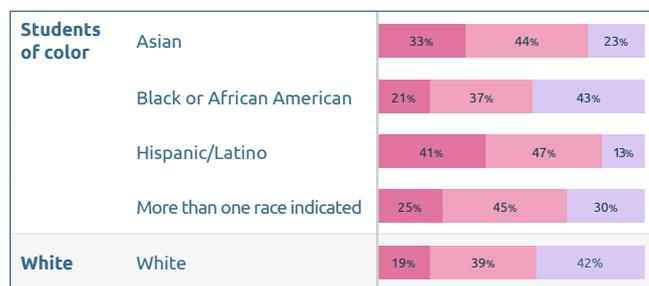
Composite earlyReading:

Average % of Students at or Above Benchmark, Winter 2017 — 19%

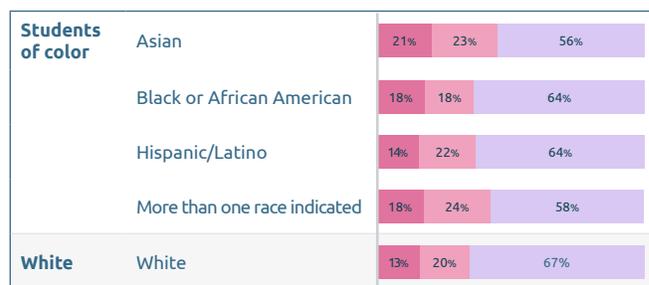
Average % of Students at or Above Benchmark, Winter 2018 — 46%

But the real excitement, Goodman says, came in looking at the reduction in race-based achievement gaps. The district formed a workgroup specifically targeting the Letter Sounds subtest:

High Risk Some Risk Low Risk



Fall earlyReading – Letter Sounds by Race/Ethnicity



Winter earlyReading – Letter Sounds by Race/Ethnicity

Kindergarten teachers are no longer seeing a dip in proficiency between fall and winter, but steady growth throughout the school year. "Since this took place," Goodman says, "We've seen a 20–30 percentage-point-increase in results at individual schools." Goodman is excited about the growth and looking forward to future student progress with FAST.