

Driving impact through implementation science

How Northwest Local School District achieved 8- to 16- point gains in MAP RIT scores across grades 1–5 in first year of Amplify CKLA implementation



Northwest Local
School District

Background

Located in Hamilton County, approximately 12 miles from downtown Cincinnati, Ohio, Northwest Local School District serves approximately 8,200 students across one pre-school, five elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools, and one alternative school. The student population is 38.2% White, 36.4% Black, 12% two or more races, 7.5% Hispanic/Latino, 5.4% Asian, 0.3% Hawaiian, and 0.2% American Indian. 89% are eligible for the federal free or reduced-price meal program.

Challenge

Northwest Local School District recognized the need for change when its previous reading program struggled to gain traction with educators. “The last program we used was not a favorite among our teachers,” says Lori Riehle, assistant director of curriculum. “The adoption process did not have the teacher buy-in we needed. One reason is that there was no real review process to collect multiple sources of data and incorporate teacher voice and feedback.” Teachers who piloted programs often chose materials based on familiarity rather than effectiveness. And without a structured rubric to evaluate options against district needs, objective decision-making was difficult.

Although the district aligned on a single curriculum, inconsistent early guidance and limited monitoring made it difficult to ensure consistent use. Teachers instead created their own materials, leading to uneven student experiences and weak Tier 1 core instruction, Riehle notes.

The district applied these lessons to design a more comprehensive review process that balanced teacher engagement with clear implementation expectations.

Solution

Northwest Local School District transformed its approach to curriculum review and adoption, creating a comprehensive three-year pathway to Amplify CKLA implementation, a pathway that prioritized the building of teachers’ knowledge and also systematic decision-making.

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Pre-launch foundation (2021–2024)

Ahead of the adoption, the district provided LETRS training to make sure that teachers understood the Science of Reading and the need for change. Reading specialists launched a new review process using the Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines, and the district created and used a rubric to assess programs against identified needs.

The selection process focused exclusively on materials rated all green by EdReports, narrowing options to two programs for piloting.

Each grade level tested both programs with equal support. Pilot teachers shared wins and concerns with a literacy advisory team composed of 12 pilot teachers, two administrators, six reading specialists, two curriculum team members, and the district literacy coach.

Community engagement played a crucial role. The district held family nights where parents could hear presentations, review materials, and ask questions. When Ohio released its approved curriculum list, the data supported the district's decision to select Amplify CKLA.

Launch (2024–2025)

With support from its Amplify team, Northwest Local School District designed its launch of Amplify CKLA around four key components: professional development, awareness, communication, and clear leadership roles.

- 1. Professional development.** The district launched comprehensive training at the end of the 2023–24 school year, strategically building capacity in reading specialists and administrators first. This approach included providing additional training opportunities and look-for documents designed to support administrative teams in their oversight and coaching responsibilities.
- 2. Awareness.** The district made a deliberate effort to generate teacher excitement and buy-in. The literacy advisory team actively presented Amplify CKLA benefits to staff, established new grade-level planning structures to support implementation, and helped teachers get familiar with the materials before the following school year by giving them summer access to curriculum resources, including detailed documentation of each kit's contents.
- 3. Communication.** The district maintained constant, multi-faceted communication throughout the implementation process. Communication channels included comprehensive Q&A documents addressing common concerns; weekly Amplify CKLA updates highlighting both successes and embedded professional development opportunities; and detailed pacing guides outlining explicit expectations for curriculum delivery and timing.
- 4. Clear leadership roles.** Riehle clearly defined each stakeholder's role to eliminate confusion and ensure coordinated support. The curriculum department took responsibility for developing common pacing documents, assessments, and expectations for communication, while providing direct support to teachers through planning assistance and classroom modeling. Reading specialists and the district literacy coach focused on classroom support, data monitoring, and celebrating successful program implementation. Principals ensured that classroom visits became a standard practice for leaders and created intentional structures for collaborative planning and regular data review sessions among teachers.

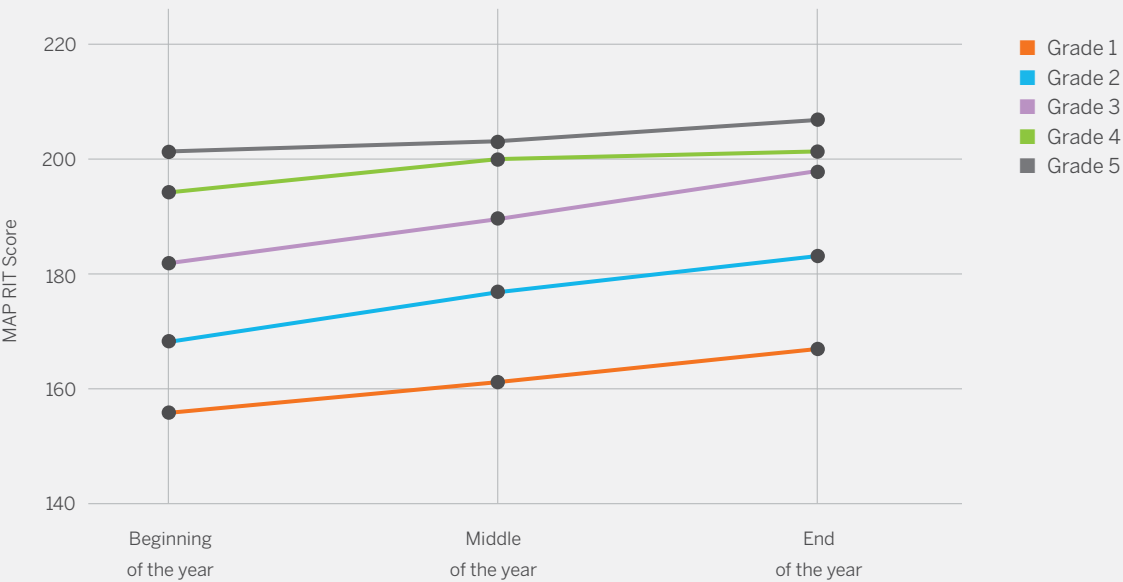
Responsive adjustments

“I could not manage this implementation from my office alone,” Riehle reflects. “I had to release power to the buildings.” This realization led her to implement administrator reflection sessions, revised Reading Specialist job descriptions, additional professional development, literacy walk protocols, and administrative rollout planning for 2025–26.

Impact

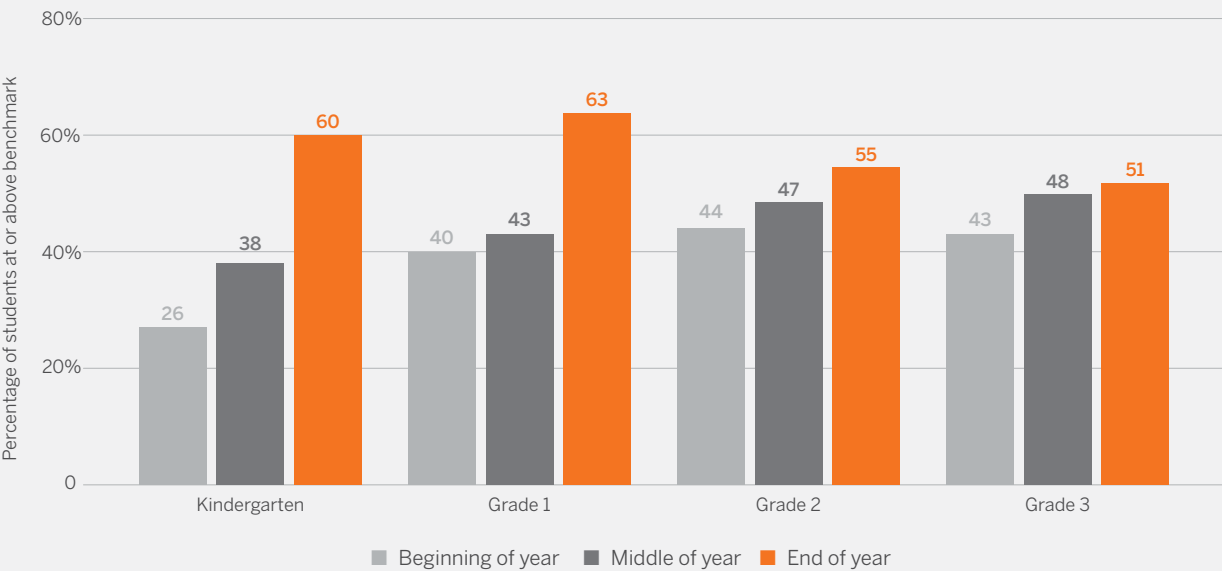
Northwest Local School District’s systematic approach to Amplify CKLA implementation delivered measurable results in its first year. MAP RIT scores increased 8–16 points from the beginning to the end of the year across grades 1–5.

Northwest Local literacy growth in the 2024–25 school year



mCLASS® data showed strong growth in kindergarten through 3rd grade. The district uses mCLASS primarily for these grades, while 4th and 5th graders on Reading Improvement and Monitoring plans receive benchmark assessments instead. Improvements were seen in both the percentage of students ending the year at or above benchmark and the percentage making average or better growth. Kindergarten students made the most significant gains, with 34% more students ending the year at or above benchmark compared to where they had started.

Northwest Local literacy growth in the 2024–25 school year

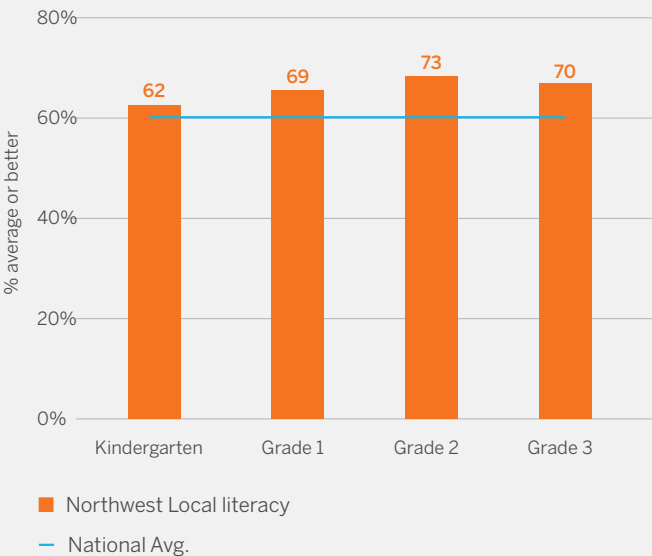


Students in these early grades showed accelerated learning regardless of starting ability, with the percentage of students making average or better growth exceeding national norms by up to 13%.

“Our data looks fantastic. When we look at our DIBELS data, we see that zones of growth, all grade levels and all performance levels, either met or exceeded the national 60% growth average. That’s huge!”

—Lori Riehle, Assistant Director of Curriculum, Northwest Local

Northwest Local literacy growth in the 2024–25 school year



The transformation extended beyond test scores. “Students also had to adjust to a new way of participating,” says school counselor Cassie Harcha. “Many students came in thinking that participation means completing an assignment for a grade or checking it off a to-do list. So when many of the lessons centered on literary discussions, rather than ‘sit and get’ work, they had to adjust.”

A building principal captured the program’s broader impact: “I love CKLA because it has united our

teams of teachers around a common resource and created so many opportunities for students to create core memories.”

The district observed increased student engagement across all levels, expanded vocabulary use by students and teachers, students making real-world connections, and improved teacher self-efficacy and confidence. These wins proved crucial to sustaining momentum during the challenging implementation period.

Survey highlights

At the end of the 2024–25 school year, teachers reflected positively on their experience with Amplify CKLA:

- 91% of teachers reported increased confidence in their ability to teach the curriculum.
- 85% of teachers in grades 3–5 said their students enjoy the knowledge topics.

Conclusion

Northwest Local School District’s Amplify CKLA implementation demonstrates the power of systematic change management in curriculum adoption. The district’s experience shows that successful implementation requires more than selecting quality materials. It demands comprehensive planning, responsive leadership, and sustained support.

Looking toward 2025–26, Northwest Local School District has identified specific areas for continued growth. Curriculum work will focus on establishing protocols, better use of pausing points and re-teaching, creating literacy walk-through forms, and minimizing competing priorities. Capacity building will continue connecting Amplify CKLA to LETRS training while deepening understanding of how scope and sequence builds across years and grade levels.

The district’s action plan includes creating pacing guides with more autonomy, explicit administrative expectation rollouts, district-wide reading protocols, and enhanced analysis of progress monitoring data. Plans also include specialized coaching for intervention specialists and multilingual/English learner tutors, expanded administrator training, and family education about the Science of Reading.

Northwest Local School District’s journey from inconsistent instruction to unified implementation offers a roadmap for districts facing similar challenges. Through deliberate planning, responsive adjustments, and unwavering focus on teacher support, the district transformed not just its reading curriculum but its entire approach to educational change management.



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on the Science of Reading,
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