

**TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION FOR THE COMMON CORE**

“ [With curriculum transformation,] we really had an opportunity to get ahead. We couldn’t wait. Scholastic helps us stay ahead of other districts in our area, across the state, and even across the country. ”

DISTRICT PROFILE

**Metro Status:** Urban

**Total Schools:** 5

**Grades:** K-12

**Total Enrollment:** 1,843

**Eligible for Free or  
Reduced-Price Lunch:** 81%

**GOALS**

Development of a coherent model of instructional leadership to guide student and professional learning focused on all students meeting the higher expectations of the new standards.

System-wide realization of what the Common Core State Standards require of both students and teachers, learned via deep understanding of the curriculum mapping process.

Template for Common Core State Standards unit construction, standards alignment to units, and complete unit templates.

Creation of summative performance tasks and formative assessment items for unit assessments.

“ The Scholastic Achievement Partners team believed in our district even more than some people in our district believed in our district. It was their constant encouragement...They kept telling us, ‘You are doing something special here.’ ”

**CHALLENGES**

Warren City Schools’ curriculum maps were long out of date. The district had never created units and assessments aligned with state standards. Frequent changes in leadership and continuing adjustments to school configurations had resulted in uncertainty and anxiety, which strongly impacted the culture of learning, teaching, and leading.

When Melissa Watson joined the team as Director of Teaching, she was determined to get the district on track.

## SOLUTION

### ■ Overview of the curriculum mapping process and schedule with the district leadership team

The first school year was dedicated to educating an instructional leadership team on the standards and building new units. Goal number one was educating and training district leaders on what the curriculum mapping process entailed. The next school year was focused on implementation, practice, and revision, and after that, the implementation of the new standards. “Expect to struggle with it and expect to get a lot of push back. But when you get to the other side of it? It’s like the feeling of exhilaration is unbelievable.”

### ■ Common Core State Standards deconstruction with 400+ teachers and leaders from all grades and subjects

Warren educators thought they had an understanding of the standards, but it was not until going through the unpacking process that they realized they had been mistaken. With a non-traditional professional learning approach, Scholastic Achievement Partners worked side by side Warren educators involving them in the process of matching curriculum to the new standards and developing Next Generation Assessments. The two teams asked essential questions, focused on big ideas, and broke down the standards into manageable chunks.

### ■ Collaborating on protocol for unit audits and creating unit templates facilitated by SAP consultants

During this process, collaboration both with Scholastic Achievement Partners and between buildings and grade levels was encouraged. Through a hands-on approach and teamwork, participants started to realize the necessity of evolving instruction in order to achieve the results they were looking for. Describes Watson, “[Consultants were] actually sitting down, at a table, with a group of teachers, and answering their questions, listening to their frustrations, looking at their units, working them through it.”

### ■ Common Core State Standard assessment design presentation and protocol aligned to PARCC

“The assessment design process has been a huge wake-up call”, says Watson, who points out that Warren’s teachers had no exposure to the new assessments and little understanding of what they will entail. While she realizes now that there is no shortcut to preparing educators for the demands of the new standards, it is also clear that the benefits that have resulted from the collaboration and hard work extend far beyond the units that were created. The teachers are reinvigorated.

## SUCCESS!

Through its partnership with ICLE and collaboration with families, community members, and local business leaders, CCSD experienced impressive academic gains during the 2009–2010 school year. Such gains were evidenced by the overall improvement in the number of schools meeting AYP, growing from 73% in 2009 to 81% in 2010. In addition, the graduation rate increased from nearly 77% to 84%. It is expected that with increased AYP and graduation rates, progress will be made in closing the achievement gap for economically disadvantaged students in coming years. Partnering with ICLE helped all participants, through the creation of an empowered environment, to see themselves as part of the solution.

**TRANSFORMING INSTRUCTION FOR THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

“Scholastic came in and sat side-by-side with us. One of their greatest traits, besides their breadth of knowledge and experience, is their responsiveness to our needs.”

SCHOOL PROFILE

**Metro Status:** Rural

**Total Schools:** 24

**Grades:** K-12

**Total Enrollment:** 14,853

**Eligible for Free or  
Reduced-Price Lunch:** 82.5%

**GOALS**

Building district-wide understanding of the instructional shifts of the Common Core State Standards.

Deepening instructional capacity of teachers, and instructional leadership of school and central office administrators.

Supporting district leadership in aligning the current K-12 math curriculum with the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics.

“Teachers and leaders are becoming more rejuvenated about the work. It’s making them rethink pedagogically what they’re doing in the classroom.”

**CHALLENGES**

For Yakima School District, implementing the Common Core State Standards presented a challenge that they were not prepared to handle alone. The district knew they were going to need help preparing students for the rigorous demands of the new standards because classroom strategies were modeled after outdated forms of pedagogy. Leadership in all 24 schools needed coherence and structure on a scale that the district felt was almost unmanageable. With nearly 15,500 students, many of whom were English Language Learners or from low-income households, they felt the challenge of improving instructional practice once they recognized the level of rigor and the relevance that the Common Core was going to require of all their teachers and principals.

“ The School Board is recognizing this as the first time they have seen an initiative actually reach kids in the classroom. ”

## SOLUTION

### ■ Building Common Core Understanding Among Instructional Staff

SAP focused on fostering a deep understanding of the Common Core and the coming assessments across the district. They provided instructional coaching to improve teacher effectiveness and modeled the strategies for higher levels of rigor, relevance, and student engagement. This involved a combination of one- and two-day workshops for teachers and instructional leaders, and side-by-side coaching throughout the year to help teachers put the big ideas and instructional shifts of the Common Core into practice. Workshop facilitators walked participants through technology implications and planning and promoted active discussions regarding classroom implications for evolutionary reinvention of standards by 2014.

### ■ Increasing Rigor and Relevance Through Differentiated Instruction

Every teacher participated in two days of professional development on Rigor/Relevance to create a common language across the district and to build a bridge to the Common Core State Standards and SMARTER Balanced Assessments. This training helped teachers effectively use the Rigor/Relevance Framework® to increase the level of academic rigor and make classroom instruction more relevant and engaging for students. Teachers gained an understanding of how to analyze state tests, plan curriculum, differentiate instruction, and select the most effective instructional strategies while applying the Framework's methodology. They discovered practical resources for introducing the Rigor/Relevance Framework in their schools.

### ■ Creating Organizational Leadership and Capacity for Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards

Scholastic provided leadership training and facilitated a Leadership Academy for school and building-level leaders on how to help the district through the change management process. It also teamed up with instructional leaders to align school curriculum to the new standard. Recognizing the need for continued support, they also provided job-embedded coaching for leaders and teachers. They worked with the principal to establish a culture of high expectations by regularly meeting with school staff and community to create a shared vision—a common definition of student success—of students not only as scholars but also as future workers, citizens, consumers, and parents.

## SUCCESS!

The Yakima School District recognized that the Common Core is not just about students learning, but the teachers and leadership as well. Principals from schools in the district have experienced that SAP has helped create a collaborative environment where teachers work together in meeting quarterly professional development goals. Instructional leaders have been armed by SAP with the tools to meet the challenges of the Common Core and have already begun helping other teachers and leaders at their schools to prepare for the changes to come. Yakima's commitment to improvement, along with SAP's support over a multi-year initiative, is helping prepare their students for college and 21st century careers.

### CREATING A SHARED VISION OF SUCCESS TO INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

“We now have more students applying to college, going to college, and getting scholarships to college. We definitely see the success in our partnership with SAP.”

#### DISTRICT PROFILE

**Metro Status:** Urban

**Total Schools:** 274

**Grades:** PreK-12

**Total Enrollment:** 166,233

**Eligible for Free or  
Reduced-Price Lunch:** 75.6%

#### GOALS

Increase leadership and instructional capacity to achieve a shared vision of success

Strengthen instructional practices and professional development opportunities.

Improve students' standardized scores, reading proficiency, and confidence.

#### CHALLENGES

“Bringing the SAP instructional coaches in allowed the teachers to feel more comfortable and less threatened than having someone from the central office coming down and making them feel like they were being rated.”

The School District of Philadelphia is the eighth largest school district in the nation. The district lacked the capacity to effectively implement district-wide professional development, and as a result, student achievement was lagging, particularly in the large comprehensive high schools. When they received a large Small Learning Community (SLC) grant, leadership in the School District of Philadelphia thought that the grant would make the process of improving instruction and building leadership capacity easier. Instead they were met with an extra set of unexpected challenges. With major turnovers in school and district-based leadership, new stakeholders brought with them new perspectives about funding use and teacher professional development strategies. Such instability contributed to the decline in student performance and inconsistency in achievement measures. Realizing that both leadership and instructional quality were suffering, the School District of Philadelphia engaged with Scholastic Achievement Partners for help achieving their goals.

“SAP worked side by side with leadership teams and instructional teams to lay the groundwork for each of the schools, every new school year.”

## SOLUTION

### ■ Building the Instructional Leadership

Principals were trained by the SAP team to access, analyze, and track key performance and behavioral data using district data management systems. This provided the ability to oversee incidents of student misbehavior, the average daily attendance rates, and the students' scoring proficiency on state exams. Building-level leaders worked shoulder to shoulder with consultants to develop strategic action plans to address gaps in these and other related areas. Plans were monitored with monthly and end-of-year reports updating progress toward goals.

### ■ Improving Instructional Capacity of Teachers

Teachers attended district-sponsored professional development sessions, completed online Scholastic professional development courses, and received supplemental in-classroom coaching support. All educators were also provided with print resources which were then used as a source of reference in the classroom, either individually or with SAP coaches. Online surveys were completed so that the impact of professional development on teaching practices could be monitored and measured.

### ■ Organizing Small Learning Community Models

SAP created a personalized learning environment for students with small learning communities reflecting each school's individual strengths and needs. These communities individualized the student experience in a large urban school. SAP then coached the teachers on constructing lesson plans and adjusting instruction to meet the needs of students in the learning communities while school leaders were given guidance on structuring re-organization.

### ■ Developing a Rigorous and Relevant School and Classroom Learning Environment

SAP placed a heavy emphasis on helping teachers create a pedagogical approach that individualized student instruction. They gave teachers an overview of the new Common Core State Standards and how these changes related to the Pennsylvania state standards. SAP then coached teachers in the creation of CCSS-appropriate lesson plans by providing instructional strategies that focused on rigor, relevance, and building relationships.

## SUCCESS!

Nearly all goals of the district's various grants have been met. Teachers and principals alike have found the combination of both instructional and leadership coaches to be an invaluable asset to their own professional development. Students have become open to the process, gladly providing feedback to the coaches and teachers knowing that their input will result in a classroom that is more engaging and where they are more likely to succeed. The district has seen an improvement in students' standardized test scores and a dramatic increase in the number of students applying, attending, and receiving scholarships to college.

Comprehensive Professional Learning Solutions for Literacy, Math & Leadership

For more information, contact us at [SAP@scholastic.com](mailto:SAP@scholastic.com), or visit [www.scholastic.com/sap](http://www.scholastic.com/sap) today.

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