



# Making AYP in Math

## A Title 1 School Transformation

### WEST SEATTLE FAST FACTS

- Title 1 school
- 360 K–5 students
- 85% Eligible for free or reduced price lunch
- 15% Special education
- 35% English Language Learners
- 33% Bilingual

### DREAMBOX IMPLEMENTATION

- All K–5 classrooms
- Special education
- Intervention
- Enrichment

### FUNDING SOURCES

- School Improvement Grant
- Title 1 Federal Funds

### ABOUT DREAMBOX LEARNING

DreamBox Learning's Intelligent Adaptive Learning™ program accelerates student learning by ensuring every student works continually in their optimal learning zone and helps all students achieve math proficiency.

### BACKGROUND

West Seattle Elementary was a school in trouble. Located in Seattle's High Point neighborhood, it's a diverse, traditionally low-performing, low-income school. 85% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch and many children are one, two or even three years behind their grade level in math, reading and other subjects. West Seattle was one of Seattle's lowest-achieving schools and among the lowest-performing 5% of schools in the nation. When adequate yearly progress (AYP) goal areas were not met for four consecutive years, it was time for a change.

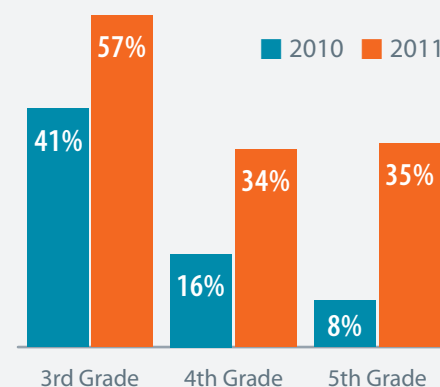
In four months, after receiving a School Improvement Grant for transformation, bringing in a new principal and implementing a Continuous Improvement Plan which included use of DreamBox Learning, West Seattle Elementary posted the highest growth in math scores in the Seattle School District, 2.5 times greater than the average math gains for the district.

### → CHALLENGE:

#### Closing the achievement gap

The Seattle Public School District was awarded a School Improvement Grant (Merit Grant) aimed at helping West Seattle Elementary make dramatic improvement. This program targets schools with the lowest academic track records in the nation, awarding federal

### Increase in Students Proficient on the State Math Test



grants to help them make adequate yearly progress and boost test scores. With this grant the district began its "transformation" work: a new principal was assigned to lead new and existing teaching staff who were given additional professional development to improve instruction, introduce a new curriculum, and increase overall learning time. As part of the transformation, West Seattle added the DreamBox Learning adaptive math program to its curriculum to improve math proficiency and close the achievement gap. Principal Vicki Sacco describes the overall mind set behind each step as West Seattle's new mantra: "A relentless pursuit of academic success for every student."

The challenge to ensure success for every child at West Seattle Elementary was daunting. "Many of our students

**“West Seattle students had the highest growth in math MAP test scores of any school in the Seattle School District, increasing at a rate that was 2.5 times higher than the district average!”**

— Vicki Sacco, Principal

are students of poverty with low math test scores,” says Sacco. “In general terms, performance was very, very poor. Only 8% of our 5th grade students and 16% of our fourth-graders were scoring at standard. That’s absolutely unacceptable for any school regardless of the demographics. When the school district compared our school to another school of similar demographics the test scores were just dramatically low.”

Sacco put together a Continuous School Improvement plan to jump-start the improvement of student performance. The Merit Grant provided the school with four additional days and increased class time by 15 minutes each day. Professional development for teachers began during the summer and was embedded during the school year. With an eye toward family engagement, Ms. Sacco established a program for consistent communication with parents. She formalized evaluation processes as well, with mid-year feedback sessions for teachers and monthly progress monitoring with the District.

## → SOLUTION:

### An adaptive learning model for math instruction

Sacco’s continuous school improvement plan also included the implementation of DreamBox Learning as a key component of a new computer-based intervention program designed to increase math achievement among struggling students. She says, “I was looking for something to help our school close the achievement gap in mathematics. I liked what I saw in DreamBox, and was very happy with its ease of implementation. I knew our teachers and students could get on the program very quickly, and the administrator reports and student progress reports are easy to use and navigate.”

Sacco originally saw DreamBox as an intervention tool for struggling students. “When I first purchased DreamBox, funding was an issue despite its reasonable price. That’s why we implemented it only for intervention initially. We identified six to eight kids in a classroom and bought licenses for them.” Sacco soon realized that DreamBox could help all of her students, whether struggling or advanced, progress in mathematics.

“When we looked at MAP data, we saw that some of our advanced learners weren’t making the kinds of growth we were hoping to see, perhaps because we focused most of our resources on our struggling kids,” she says. “That drove a decision to expand our DreamBox implementation to all of our K–5 students.”

## → RESULTS:

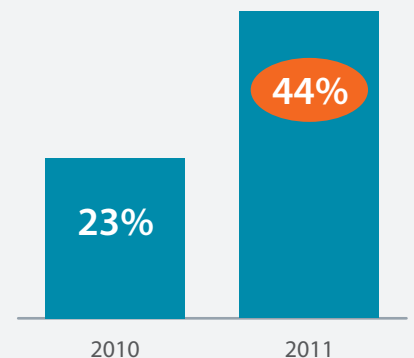
### Dramatic improvements in math performance

West Seattle observed immediate improvements in the math performance of students using DreamBox. In the series of standardized testing following the School Improvement Grant, West Seattle students had the highest growth in math MAP test scores of any school in the Seattle School District. In fact, growth in Math MAP test scores from fall to winter increased at a rate that was 2.5 times higher than the district average. Sacco says they’ve seen the students using DreamBox making significant progress. “When I first got some of the math results back, I pulled up a report on which of the kids were using DreamBox and looked at their math scores,” she says. “There was a dramatic improvement in the classrooms using DreamBox frequently and consistently.”

Teachers at West Seattle have found that DreamBox is a great tool to use in reaching students who are below grade level or resistant to traditional teaching styles. The school has seen significant

### Closing the Achievement Gap

3RD, 4TH, AND 5TH GRADERS  
PROFICIENT ON THE STATE MATH TEST



**“Since implementing the DreamBox program, my students’ scores on the MAP test (Measure of Academic Progress) have increased an average of 40 points! This is a huge gain, and one I believe reflects the efficacy of the DreamBox program”**

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gains among all students using the program, including English Language Learners and special education students.

Special Education teacher Elizabeth Raymond has found DreamBox to be extremely effective for engaging students and raising math proficiency (and corresponding test scores). “Since implementing the DreamBox program, my students’ scores on the MAP test (Measure of Academic Progress) have increased an average of 40 points,” Raymond reports. “This is a huge gain and one I believe reflects the efficacy of the DreamBox program. It helps me assess areas of weakness to remediate, plan for IEP goals, and provide opportunities to celebrate the academic milestones of my special education kids.” Raymond says she has trouble keeping students away from DreamBox. “I don’t have to coax students into the program — they actually pester me during the day, asking ‘when is it my turn to go on DreamBox?’”

As one of a dozen new teachers at West Seattle Elementary, Chrissie Coxon teaches fourth grade and is a consistent DreamBox user. She began using DreamBox for 30 minutes per day and saw student test scores in math not only increasing, but increasing at a much faster rate than students not using DreamBox. She says, “DreamBox is an integral piece of leading my students

towards significant academic gains this year.”

Shirley Mae Anderson, West Seattle’s Math Coach, has been impressed by the quality of math instruction. “I like DreamBox because the program specifically supports the development of number sense,” she says. “Number sense is critical because students in the thirdgrade can’t move on to higher level mathematics without this foundational understanding. DreamBox does a really good job of helping students compose and decompose numbers using 10s. And I’ve seen students making discoveries using the program that they don’t even realize they are doing. They are exploring with DreamBox.”

Sacco says DreamBox’s approach to differentiated instruction is key to its success. “Students have different learning styles and need different instructional methods. Our teachers are working towards a Math Workshop model in their classroom where they push small groups of kids towards working independently, but they need another program for teaching others at the same time. DreamBox is being utilized in that way, particularly in some of the classrooms that are further ahead.

The teachers know all of their kids are getting good instruction even when their attention is focused on the kids with particular challenges.”

### **→ MOVING FORWARD:** Sustaining educational excellence

As part of this School Improvement Grant selection, the principal, teachers and staff at West Seattle Elementary are committed to turning their low-performing school into a model of educational excellence. And while three years may sound like a long time to some, in terms of improving the metrics in a school like West Seattle Elementary, it is a daunting task.

Principal Sacco sees DreamBox Learning playing a pivotal role in helping West Seattle meet its goals and maintain its eligibility in the federal grant program. “For some kids, DreamBox provides enrichment,” she says. “For others, it reinforces what they’ve learned. And for some kids who are two or even three years behind grade level, the program fills gaps in their learning. I intend to continue using DreamBox schoolwide as a way to help meet our ultimate goal — high academic standards and expectations for all of our students.”

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