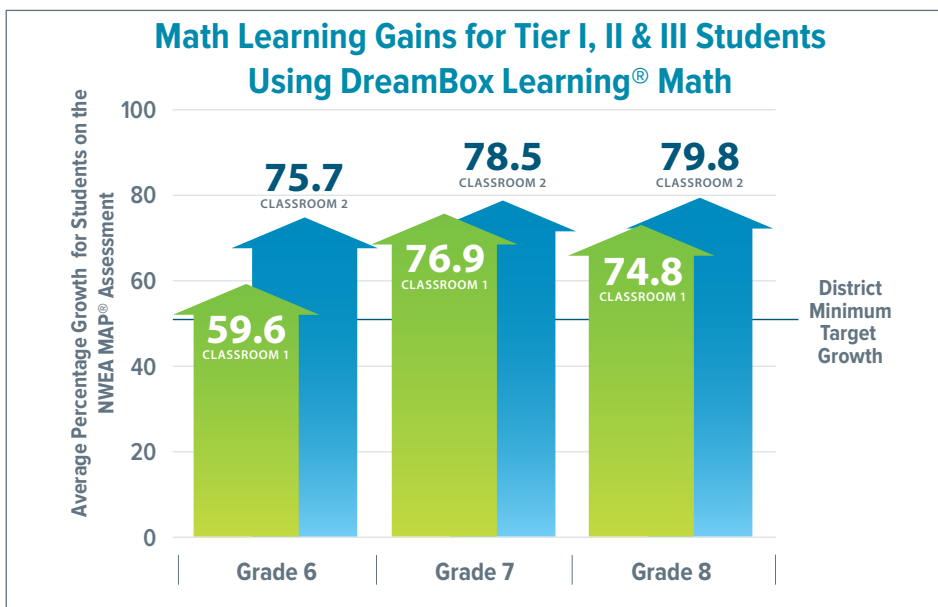


Jessamine County Schools, Kentucky

# Personalized Interventions Speed Learning Gains for Struggling Middle School Students

## SUCCESS AT A GLANCE



This graph represents student growth on the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress (MAP®) assessment against the school district's RtI growth targets.

*“The topics that are scary or hard for them are achievable in DreamBox because they have the support they need to fill gaps from many grades back.”*

*—David Nelson,  
Intervention Specialist*

## CHALLENGE

### Equity for all students

Six years ago, nearly one in five of the 7,500 students in the suburban Jessamine County Schools in central Kentucky qualified for special services. To address this situation, the district administration focused on implementing an intervention plan that identifies struggling students early and accelerates learning for students with tiered levels of intervention and support matched to student needs. Finding the right curricular solution proved to be a challenge for the district.

“We desperately needed a solution to provide equity for our students, especially in Tiers II and III. It’s hard to find a program that would provide the instructional data we needed to make decisions about these students that could also do targeted intervention across the K–8 continuum,” says district Response to Intervention (RtI) coordinator Cindy Matherly.

## SOLUTION

### A personalized math learning solution

“Our goal is to build the stamina of the Tiers II and III students in order to see measurable gains in student learning throughout the year,” remarked Matherly. The willingness to make mistakes, persist, and work through to solutions are a major factor in mathematics proficiency and success. In the fall of the 2014–2015 school year, after thorough evaluation, district administrators adopted DreamBox Learning® Math to create momentum and accelerate math learning, and to act as a key curriculum component to support middle school students in need of remediation and intervention.

In West Jessamine middle schools, students in need of additional support spend one of their electives in an intervention class that remediates their skills. DreamBox is the primary math curriculum used by students in this class. "Students have the option to complete work from their regular math class; however, most choose to use DreamBox. The topics that are scary or hard for them are achievable in DreamBox because they have the support they need to fill gaps from many grades back," reported David Nelson, intervention specialist at West Jessamine Middle School.

The adaptivity of DreamBox ensures that every student, regardless of whether they are Tier I, II, or III, receives the right level of instruction, at the right time. DreamBox continuously assesses understanding and identifies where students need the most help. Using this data, DreamBox delivers lessons that guide them across those conceptual gaps, no matter how far back those gaps might be in relation to their grade level. "With thirty-two students in my class, knowing what each student is doing at any given moment is a challenge," acknowledges Nelson. "The detailed information I have access to about each student's learning saves me time and enables me to differentiate instruction appropriately."

### In middle school, engagement drives learner dedication

"This is the first middle school intervention we've used that actually respects the age of the students. They never want to stop using it. They use it at home, and are getting themselves up earlier to play DreamBox during Breakfast Club," added Matherly.

This kind of dedication on the students' part doesn't happen without engagement. Students who need the kind of support RtI provides have struggled throughout their school careers. The urge to give up can be very quick to appear. DreamBox helps students work through that urge, with deep engagement that fuels persistence and math excitement. "There was instant engagement and interest," says Nelson. "It is new and exciting for me to see them being so positive about math."

## RESULTS

### Experiencing success motivates learners

Continuing the momentum from previous years, student engagement in DreamBox has translated into learning progress for RtI students. Not only are students attending class more regularly and completing assignments, they are closing math learning gaps. Student engagement in DreamBox has translated into learning progress for RtI students. The district hoped to see a growth percentile of a least 50 (average growth), with the ideal being at 70 or higher, on the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress (MAP®) assessments. For the two eighth grade DreamBox classes, one group's growth percentile was 74.8 and the other was 79.8. In seventh grade, the average growth was 76.9 and 78.5 for the two groups, with several students reaching 80 or higher. At the sixth-grade level, the average percentiles of growth were 59.6 and 75.7.

"Overall, the data is really strong," says Matherly. "We're seeing our bottom 10 percent of students in each grade level making significant improvement in their MAP scores, with the number of students in the 10th percentile or below being cut in half. While we can't attribute all of their accomplishments to DreamBox, we know it is helping our students be much more successful than they would be without it."

"Some of our eighth graders' skills start breaking down at multiplication and division. After a couple of months, there was noticeable growth that the students and I could both see." Nelson simplified what was working: "These are kids who have had significant barriers to their learning. In DreamBox they are seeing success and they are motivated and excited to reach even higher levels."

## DREAMBOX IMPLEMENTATION

- Implemented as part of an RtI "Breakfast Club" and after-school program
- Funded through general and Race to the Top funds
- 60 minutes per week in classrooms

## JESSAMINE FAST FACTS

- 7,500 students
- 54% free/reduced lunch
- 6 elementary schools  
2 middle schools  
2 high schools



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