



ALL THINGS ASSESSMENT

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Mildred M.
Hawk Elementary School
CORINTH, TEXAS

The pass rate for third-grade math rose
18% in just two years.



DEMOGRAPHICS

- 730 Students
- 9% Free and reduced lunch
- 2% Limited English proficient
- 8% Special education
- 5% African American
- 12% Hispanic
- 4% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 1% Native American/Alaska Native
- 5% Multiracial

Hawk Elementary School is located in Corinth, Texas, a suburban area north of the Dallas–Fort Worth metroplex. It is currently the largest elementary school in the Denton Independent School District. The elementary schools in the district are designed to serve up to 650 students, but in recent years, Hawk’s enrollment has reached as high as 830 students.

CHALLENGE

As Hawk Elementary staff worked to become a professional learning community, they tackled tough conversations about assessment practices. In 2010, they began working with assessment expert Cassandra Erkens. Focusing on the question “How do we know when students have learned it?” teachers began digging deeply into how to identify mastery. What they found was a lack of alignment between assessing and recording mastery of essential standards.

This misalignment impacted student learning. Third-grade students were demonstrating a lack of readiness for state assessments. They also routinely underperformed in

comparison with fourth- and fifth-grade students, especially in math. To address this, vertical teacher teams were created to collectively assess student problem solving and thinking.

Other areas of focus included how to better prepare rigorous common assessments and how to report on them to all stakeholders, including students, parents, and colleagues. As staff began to read and study more about effective use of assessment, they realized they needed tools to help guide instruction.

IMPLEMENTATION

Hawk Elementary staff received customized on-site coaching. Specific guidance given during PLC team meetings focused on effective practices for engaging students with learning targets, writing rubrics to measure proficiency, and engaging students in collaboration to make student-friendly rubrics. One of the most powerful strategies teams learned was to score student work collaboratively.

In addition, teachers have worked together to unpack the state standards; evaluate each standard for its relevance in the areas of endurance, leverage, and readiness; and identify the most essential standards to measure for mastery. Once the essentials were identified, the teachers designed

a standards-based report card to communicate these standards to all stakeholders.

Each standard reported has a common assessment designed to assess for student mastery. Each assessment has an accompanying rubric designed to communicate expectations to students and measure performance when the task is complete. Teachers then work as teams to develop common formative assessments to use throughout instruction to monitor student learning from day to day. Teachers use weekly PLC meetings to review formative and summative assessments and make decisions about interventions.

“Working with Cassandra Erkens allowed me, as the campus leader, to pull together a variety of best practices and research for the teachers I serve. I felt confident this was the most effective training to support student learning.”

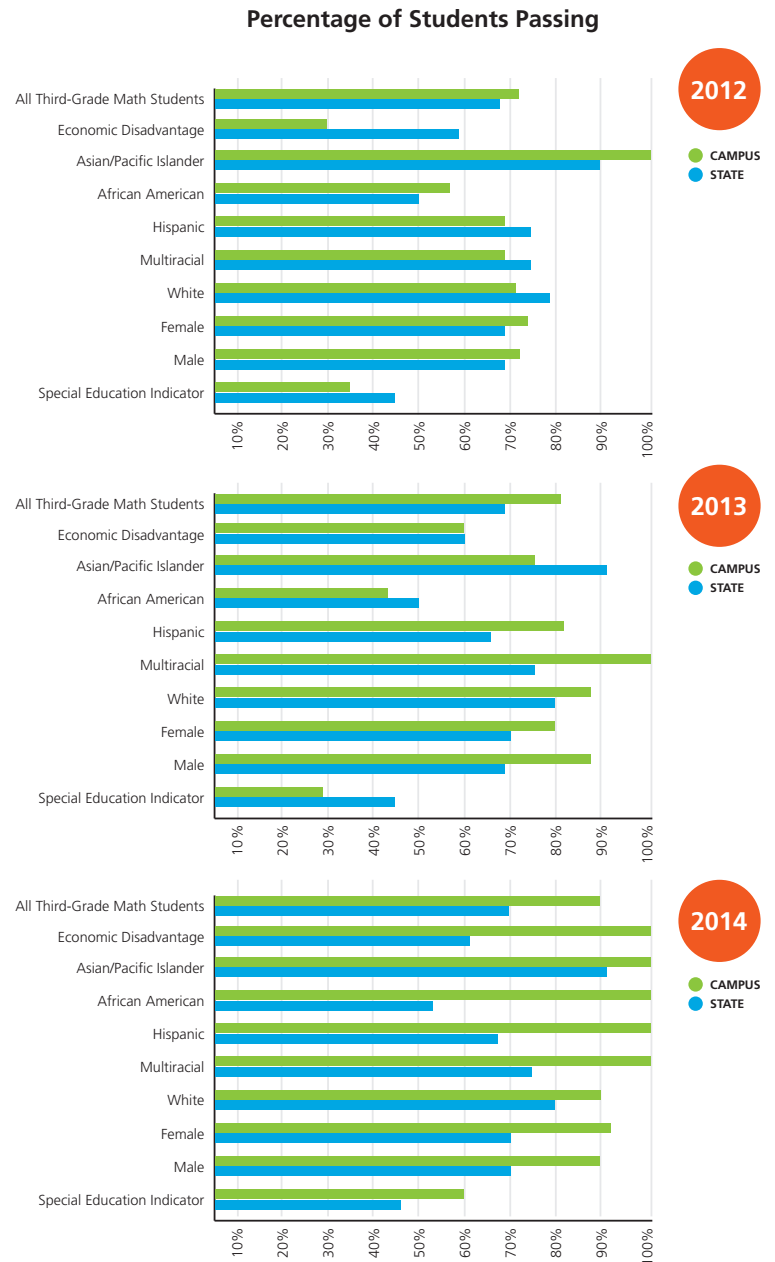
—Principal Susannah O’Bara

RESULTS

After Hawk Elementary initiated a standards-based grading and reporting system, the entire district worked to transition to this system. All elementary schools in the Denton ISD currently use a standards-based report card, and all secondary schools are implementing standards-based grading. This change in grading and reporting has clarified learning objectives for staff, students, and the community.

Although Hawk Elementary transitioned to a more rigorous state assessment, the practices they learned enabled them to maintain high student achievement. Students have learned to take ownership of their learning by using feedback and tracking their progress through a variety of tools developed by teachers with the support of Solution Tree experts.

“Cassandra Erkens provided us the tools needed to dig deeply into the standards, break them apart, and collaboratively determine proficiency of these standards,” says Principal Susannah O’Bara. “She also guided us in becoming an assessment-literate campus. Now, we facilitate deep learning of rigorous standards for our students. All teachers work in teams to design common formative assessments, and they use these assessments to guide instruction and maximize student achievement daily.”



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