



# ALL THINGS ASSESSMENT

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

## Rutland High School VERMONT

“For the past five years, reading scores have been consistently at or above state averages.”



## DEMOGRAPHICS

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Rutland, Vermont, is an urban location serving about 23,000 residents in a very rural state. Although Rutland is a racially homogeneous community, it is home to a very diverse socioeconomic demographic.

- 860 students
- 39% Free and reduced lunch
- 2% Limited English proficient
- 12% Special education
- 1% African American
- 2% Hispanic
- 1% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 2% Other

## CHALLENGE

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Rutland High School served its students well, but the staff desired to go from good to great. Many teachers practiced as independent contractors, with no real opportunities or impetus to collaborate. Students received a curriculum that varied from class to class. The data that resulted from assessments was not used systematically to improve instruction. There was no system in place to best support students who were not making it, no system that further challenged students to go beyond standard expectations.

Although teachers had the best intentions, many of Rutland students' early standardized test scores were lower than the state average. Some of the staff had heard of the success other schools and districts had experienced when staff worked in a collaborative culture to ensure every student in every class learns at high levels. However, there was no buildingwide commitment to learn, implement, and practice these principles.

## IMPLEMENTATION

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The staff of Rutland made a commitment to become a professional learning community in 2010. The first decision made by school leadership was to send staff to Solution Tree summits and institutes. Within a year, the school had reached a critical mass, both in terms of staff numbers attending the events and understanding the concepts. On-site workshops and coaching brought a focused, customized approach to understanding and implementing daily practices that would build and sustain a solid foundation for continuous school improvement. One of these areas of focus was assessment. The staff made great strides with the support of national assessment expert Cassandra Erkens.

Teachers soon gained a collective understanding of and commitment to formative and summative assessment systems. Thus, teams established a clear and common guaranteed and viable curriculum. With the help of the Data Team System, they established a process that ensured a thorough approach to reviewing student results with a commitment to intervention. Finally, the daily schedule changed to allow for an intervention block during the school day.

“After attending Solution Tree assessment training, our staff was convinced that working together, sharing leadership, and committing to a common assessment approach would benefit not only our students but also our colleagues. Like a skilled basketball coach, Cassandra helped us understand and stay faithful to running our offense.”

—Bill Olsen, principal

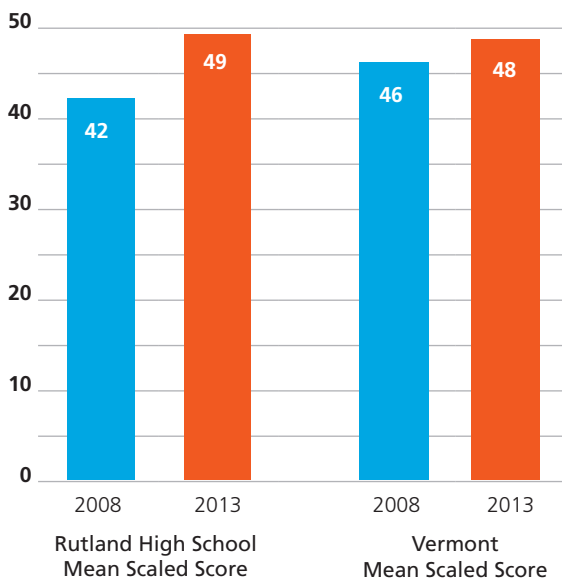
## RESULTS

Many of Rutland students' early standardized test scores were lower than the state average in 2007 and 2008. As staff worked to improve their collaborative common formative assessment process, their scores improved. This progress was evident throughout the remainder of their time using New England Common Assessment Program (through the 2012–2013 school year). Currently the state of Vermont uses the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The goal of Rutland continues to be to perform at or better than state average. So far their scores show they are on track.

“Our staff’s dedication to the assessment processes we learned from Cassandra has resulted in increased student achievement,” says Rutland principal Bill Olsen.

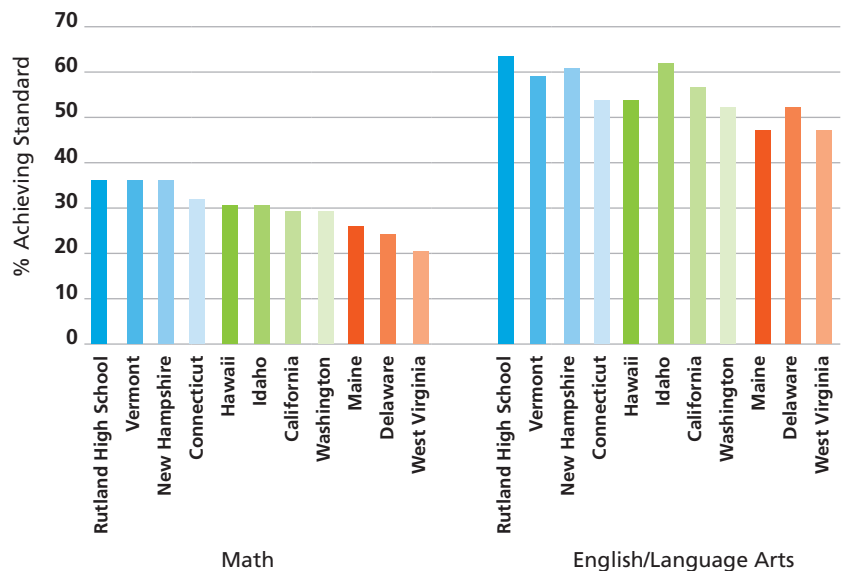
**“We have seen strong results in reading scores. In 2007 they were below state average. For the past five years, they have been consistently at or above state averages. Math scores have risen to be more closely aligned with state mean scaled score averages.”**

**New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)  
Reading (11th Grade)**



**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)  
11th Grade—2015**

*Vermont schools switched from NECAP to SBAC in the 2014–2015 school year.*



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