



Case Study:
Carmen Schools of Science
and Technology - Milwaukee,
Wisconsin



Catalyzing Data Driven Decision Making

Meaningful assessment data empowers educators, leaders, and learners

A network of schools in Wisconsin, the Carmen Schools of Science and Technology, recently adopted the Illustrative Mathematics (IM) curriculum and was looking for a rigorous assessment solution that not only aligned to the curriculum and common core standards, but also to Wisconsin state standards and end-of-year state testing. Cognia IM-aligned Interim Assessments provided a rigorous assessment solution, giving essential data to educators and leaders to evaluate curriculum use, adjust instruction, and support student learning. This new data also gave leaders a starting point to start a new data cycle and improve data processes.

Carmen Schools is a public charter school network in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This network, which spans two middle schools and three high schools, is focused on the goal of developing students as critical thinkers and self-directed learners. When they adopted the Illustrative Mathematics curriculum in 2021, they made math a priority for their network in terms of professional development and coaching resources, and wanted to ensure that they had aligned assessments and a clear data cycle.

Seeking rigor and alignment

After adopting the Illustrative Math curriculum, and consulting with a range of stakeholders, Carmen Schools adopted Cognia Illustrative Math-aligned Interim Assessments.

The Cognia Interim Assessments were able to fulfill the network's need for a more rigorous assessment solution that aligned to both curriculum and grade level standards. Using an assessment system developed by assessment experts ensured the consistency and quality of their assessments.

Kyra VandeBunte, the Director of Teaching & Learning at Carmen Schools, explained that a big benefit of the interims is how they are more closely aligned to end of year testing. Cognia Interim Assessments also allow for more immediate adjustments in instruction to improve student outcomes both in the classroom and on end-of-year tests.

Creating the data cycle

The utilization of Cognia Interim Assessments in conjunction with the Illustrative Math curriculum led to the creation of a new data cycle for the school district.

Implementing a quarterly interim gave educators and leaders a starting point and then they built from there. This new data cycle included professional development days for staff, with deeper dives into the interim data and instructional planning based on the data.

Because of this data cycle, Carmen Schools now has a strong foundation of assessment data literacy, with staff getting frequent touchpoints to review and analyze essential data. This type of focused analysis has become a tool for improving instructional practices and in turn, student outcomes.

One area where Carmen leadership has been encouraging educators to focus is on students' written work. While the tests are on computer, they have teachers collect scratch paper and really look closely at students' work on paper to see their thinking around each problem and how they arrive at answers. This provides additional depth to their review of student performance and growth over each interim.

“Ensuring that as many of our students are proficient in math as possible is really foundational to our mission... so adopting the [Cognia Interim Assessments] gave us a really clear bar of where our kids were on the road to proficiency and gave us information to be able to intervene and reteach where needed and just have a better sense of what was happening in our classrooms.”



Promising results and continuous improvement

Carmen Schools shared some of the aggregate data for student performance on the assessments, and the results are promising.

Since the 2021–2022 school year and across all schools and grades, the number of students scoring in the “Does Not Meet” range has decreased while the number of students scoring in the “Meets” and “Exceeds” range has increased.

Looking into the future, leaders at Carmen Schools plan to continue improving their protocol for leveraging the data from the interim assessments in the classroom.

They have already started implementing a more focused and simplified method for data-driven instructional planning.

School 1 - Math Grade 6				
	21-22	22-23	23-24	Change in Percentage Points (21-22 to 23-24)
Does Not Meet	54.4%	45.2%	28.3%	-26.1%
Approaching	26.3%	26.0%	13.0%	-13.3%
Meet	14.0%	12.3%	21.7%	+7.7%
Exceeds	5.3%	16.4%	37%	+31.7%

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