

SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

# Tacoma Public Schools Expands Data Culture and Learning

Tacoma Public Schools

Located 35 miles south of Seattle, Tacoma Public Schools (TPS) in Washington serves nearly 30,000 pre-K–12 students across 60 schools. TPS’ size and reputation have made it a “lighthouse district,” a district that serves as a model for others.

Just as a lighthouse illuminates a path forward for ships, TPS shows other districts what’s possible when education leaders use innovative measures to improve student learning and reach ambitious goals.

For the past six years, TPS has used *i-Ready Assessment*—a standards-based, adaptive diagnostic—to give educators actionable insight into students’ learning needs. The district’s Curriculum and Instruction department and Data Assessment Research Team (DART) have administered the assessment three times a year with great success. Thus, when TPS education leaders began looking for a new core mathematics curriculum that would help students meet the new rigorous state standards, they were interested in learning more about another *i-Ready* program: *i-Ready Classroom Mathematics*.



TPS adopted *i-Ready Classroom Mathematics*, a blended, teacher-led mathematics program, three years ago for Grades K–5. This core mathematics program is designed to foster student engagement and learning with rigorous practice opportunities and easy-to-read reports.

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# What They Did

In March 2020, TPS was only halfway through its first year of *i-Ready Classroom Mathematics* implementation when the district had to quickly move to remote learning because of the global COVID-19 pandemic. By working closely with their *i-Ready Partners* team, TPS educators were able to transition from using *i-Ready Classroom Mathematics* in physical classrooms to using it in a 100 percent virtual-learning environment.

During the implementation year, TPS educators and their *i-Ready Partners* focused on the following:



## Learning new instructional practices

After adoption, TPS' first area to concentrate on was training teachers in new instructional practices that emphasized student-centered learning, discourse-rich lessons, and routines that students of all ages could follow.



## Addressing questions and concerns swiftly

TPS educators understood from their experience adopting *i-Ready Assessment* that they could count on the *i-Ready Partners* team to be responsive and address concerns quickly. Through frequent formal and informal meetings, school administrators as well as district leadership planned, analyzed data, and kept implementation on track.



## Ensuring educators got the right professional development (PD)

The implementation team catered PD sessions to TPS' unique needs and adjusted the PD plan to reflect whether TPS needed remote or in-person training. "A typical day of PD started with us asking, 'What are Tacoma's priorities? Do our standard trainings meet their needs? If not, how can we modify those trainings to meet their needs?'" said Jeffrey Blackburn, PD specialist at Curriculum Associates.



## Ensuring families were in the loop

Educators often had to ask for family support during remote learning. This made it very important that families from a variety of backgrounds and experiences were able to understand what their students were learning and why the way they were learning was different from what families were used to. TPS educators regularly communicated with families and often used *i-Ready* resources (e.g., Family Letters in multiple languages) to do so.



## Improving access to rigorous grade-level content

Getting students access to grade-level instruction, without sacrificing the rigor of the curriculum—especially in some of the more economically disadvantaged and diverse schools—was (and continues to be) a priority for TPS administrators. The design principles of *i-Ready Classroom Mathematics* helped support this commitment to academic equity, particularly the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching training, discourse-based routines, and language supports for English Learners.

*"In partnership with parents and community, we will provide a comprehensive educational experience that is rigorous, individualized, and enables students to contribute to a changing and diverse world."*

—TPS Mission

## What They Accomplished

As a result of school shutdowns due to the pandemic, educators everywhere are asking, “How do I know what my students know?”

TPS educators are using the features of *i-Ready Classroom Mathematics* to address students’ unfinished learning and ensure instruction balances prerequisite skills and grade-level content.

The program’s discourse-based Try–Discuss–Connect routine helps teachers informally assess students’ understanding in real time, and the intuitive reports allow for comprehensive, quantitative insights into student learning and growth.



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*“TPS and Curriculum Associates have viewed our relationship as an authentic partnership grounded in serving the students, educators, and families within our local community . . . As a district, we feel the commitment from our [Curriculum Associates] partners on a daily basis.”*

—TPS Administrator