



Highlands Borough School District

Dr. Susan Compton and Principal Rosemary Schutz are passionate about using data to tell the story about to help students reach their full potential. They are also passionate about celebrating students' success. The administration at Highlands celebrates and encourages students through school publications, academic pep rallies, an Elementary Honor Society, and investments in media lab and a makers' space so students feel free to explore.

School-wide implementation of Running Record and NWEA MAP Growth formative assessments allow teachers at Highlands to gather data in real time, make quick adjustments to instruction, and facilitate ability and flexible grouping. "The data provide targeted instruction in the classroom, targeted Title I Academic Support Instruction in school and after school for reading and mathematics, and other interventions needed as indicated by the data," Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction Daniel Layton says. "The use of this assessment helps support our school and districts initiative to provide the most targeted and personalized learning experience." Melissa Way, mother of five students who attend and have attended Highlands Elementary, says that teachers explained her students' PARCC scores to her in a way that makes sense: "my son in 6th grade had phenomenal growth....my 2nd grader needed more personalized attention and he's getting so much support from his teachers."

District Profile

- Schools: 1
- Grades Served: PK-6
- Total Enrollment: 190
- Economically Disadvantaged: 53%

After noticing literacy gaps in incoming students, Highlands expanded their half-day pre-kindergarten to a full day program. By introducing elements of literacy and vocabulary work into pre-k, the Highlands team was able to make strides in the number of students who were on grade level for kindergarten and first grade.

Highlands thinks about data in the big picture as well: Dr. Compton explains, "Data meetings are held with grade levels and cohorts of teachers to analyze the PARCC evidence statements. Teachers are provided the evidence statements for their previous year of instruction and the statements for the students they currently have. At these meetings we work on realigning scope and sequence to address our identified weaknesses in our curriculum and our instruction." Highlands also utilized recommendations and guidance from the Monmouth County Office to build alignment among their curricular resources. They hired Math and English Language Arts specialists, added a full forty five to sixty minute block of balanced literacy to each grade level and increased the length of the math block so students had more time to practice skills. The Highlands team also decided to move many students with disabilities from self-contained classrooms into inclusion settings in order to expose students to the most rigorous lessons possible. Ultimately, Compton explains, Highlands "names and claims" their students--figuring out what students need as individuals and assuming the responsibility to provide the necessary supports that all children need in order to achieve.

Ask Highlands to tell their story:

- Balanced literacy
- After school intervention time
- Instructional supervisors
- County office support
- Full-day pre-K
- Increase in sight-word goals
- Running Record and NWEA
- Data conversations with parents
- STEAM focus



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