



Monroe County Schools

A district-delivered data solution got two teachers thinking about how to get great results for their students.

OVERVIEW

District

Monroe County Schools

Location

Forsyth, GA

Numbers

Number of students: 4,023

Number of staff: 619

Number of schools: 5

Illuminate Education Customer Since

2018

About Monroe County Schools

Monroe County is a thriving community in the heart of central Georgia, close to Atlanta and Macon. Consisting of Forsyth, Smarr, Juliette, Bolingbroke, and High Falls, Monroe County offers residents a small town atmosphere with easy access to city amenities.

Monroe County Schools (MCS) is dedicated to creating a brighter future for county residents, by focusing on the following strategic objectives:

- Attain high student achievement and success
- Develop organizational effectiveness
- Ensure student/stakeholder engagement and loyalty
- Ensure high quality professional learning, especially on the interpretation and use of data

District officials believe that all students can learn and succeed, as long as they're given the chance. The district relies on rigorous data analysis to continually improve assessments and teaching techniques, and to provide interventions to bring individual students to mastery.

Early Adopters Pave the Way for Illuminate DnA

In the spring of 2018, MCS adopted Illuminate Education's data and assessment (DnA) platform for the following reasons:

- To save money by replacing Scantron equipment
- To deliver a consistent data experience across elementary, middle, and high school grade levels
- To help students perform better on the Georgia Department of Education's mandatory End of Course (EOC) Tests

While the introduction of Illuminate DnA was received favorably, many teachers in the district were unsure about how the new platform would impact their daily activities. According to high school economics teacher Jana Peacock, teachers were ready to use the platform as

a Scantron substitute, but were a bit more wary about using data on unit tests to inform benchmarks.

Peacock's teaching partner, Chuck Simmons, says that he and Peacock decided to embrace the new tool and see what it could do for students. "The more we worked with it the more we liked it, and we keep doing more with it," he says.

Peacock and Simmons have been teaching economics together for 12 years and have developed a synergistic relationship. Peacock crunches numbers and Simmons builds the quizzes and tests, so the new data platform gave each of them something to explore.

As the duo became more facile with Illuminate DnA, they were asked to present to other faculty members about using it more effectively. Peacock and Simmons have become de facto evangelists for the platform at the district's only high school, and welcome the opportunity to offer advice as questions come up.

"We're big fans of Illuminate DnA because we've been getting great results," Simmons says. "Ninety percent of our students are passing the economics EOC."

In addition to these impressive overall scores, MCS is seeing improvement among student subgroups. Students with Disabilities (SWD) went from a 23% pass rate to 50% on the economics EOC, and African American students showed a 13% improvement.

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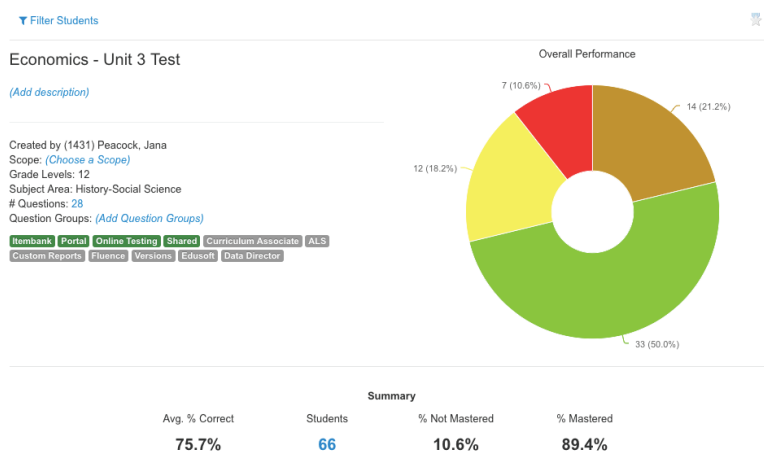
Illuminate DnA's Item Bank Makes Building Assessments Easier

One of the main reasons why students are performing so well on the economics EOC is because Illuminate DnA's item bank makes it easy to build quizzes and tests according to the specific standards that students need to master.

Peacock and Simmons were a little concerned that Illuminate DnA's item bank wouldn't capture the multi-layered thinking required to fully understand economics, but those concerns were quickly allayed by a review of the available questions. Simmons says that he can pull great questions for quizzes and tests, simply by searching by standard.

Once students take the assessments designed by Simmons, Peacock reviews the analytics. She particularly likes generating the "donut report," a circular graph that shows which students need extra assistance, such as remediation or reteaching, on specific standards.

Through the robust reporting capabilities of Illuminate DnA, teachers throughout the district can use assessment results to make better decisions about how to move forward with each student and which questions might need rewording.



Illuminate DnA's "donut report" shows student performance across a four-point scale. Comparing results from pretest to test creates a great way for teachers to show growth and talk with students about how they've progressed (or slid back) on assessments.

Student Buy-in on Data Builds Confidence

Peacock and Simmons make a point to get students to track their own progress and interpret their own data.

To help students get a better sense of where they stand, Peacock used Illuminate DnA to create custom performance bands based on the EOC's one-through-four scoring methodology, where two, three, and four are passing grades.

The new performance bands help prevent students from giving up or feeling defeated if they get what appears to be a low grade on an assessment. Based on EOC scoring, a student can receive a 57% on an assessment without panicking, because it's actually a passing grade.

Another way Peacock and Simmons engage students is to give them the opportunity to make corrections after each assessment. Students can choose up to five questions to correct for partial credit. By requiring students to state which questions they're doing over, what their original answers were, and what the correct answers are, students are able to better internalize the concepts.

Predictor Tests Give Students and Teachers Time to Succeed

While the 90% success rate on the economics EOC is impressive, what's even more remarkable is that 75% of passing students are scoring 3s and 4s on the EOC.

About a week before the actual test, Peacock and Simmons give their economics students a pretest that shows who needs work on specific standards. In the week after the pretest, high performers follow a self-driven review while their peers who need extra help get more one-on-one attention from Peacock, Simmons, and their co-teacher, Terrassa Fields.

Built-in Remediation Is the Way of the Future

One thing that Peacock and Simmons are excited about is the ability to use Illuminate DnA to build remediation into tests and quizzes. By including questions on previously taught standards, students can see if they've maintained their knowledge, grown, or fallen back and forgotten required information.

“Remediation is a useful tool to help students succeed,” Peacock says. “With Illuminate DnA, we can use remediation, analyze the data, and give specific students the extra help they need to master the material.”

Peacock, Simmons, and their peers throughout the district are excited about the improved outcomes students are achieving thanks to Illuminate DnA, and are eager to match the capabilities of the platform to the evolving needs of each classroom.

