



Warsaw Community Schools

A mid-sized Indiana school system empowers teachers to use assessment data to improve instruction.

OVERVIEW

District

Warsaw Community Schools

Location

Warsaw, IN

Numbers

Number of students: 7,000

Number of staff: 1,200

Number of schools: 13

Illuminate Education Customer Since

June 2017

About Warsaw Community Schools

Warsaw Community Schools is a nationally recognized public school district in Kosciusko County, Indiana. The district includes 13 schools within the communities of Warsaw, Winona Lake, Claypool, and Leesburg. Its mission is to inspire and equip all students to continuously acquire and apply knowledge and skills while pursuing their dreams and enriching the lives of others.

The district's strategic plan is built on four key pillars: (1) build and practice personal empathy; (2) equip students with adaptable life skills; (3) develop inclusive learning environments; and (4) connect students with real-world learning opportunities.

“An Incredible Transformation”

It's often said that school systems are data rich but information poor. That description applied to Warsaw Community Schools—until they discovered Illuminate Education's Data and Assessment (DnA) platform.

“We struggled with trying to make sense of all of our data,” says Chief Analytics Officer Dr. Shelly Wilfong. “The district's prior efforts to use assessment data warehouses weren't successful. Teachers found these systems to be very complicated—and so they didn't end up using them.”

That all changed a few years ago when Warsaw began using DnA, a system for building and administering standards-based assessments to inform instruction, as its assessment and data management platform. “It has been an incredible transformation in our district,” Wilfong says.

Assessment Made Easy

Warsaw teachers are using DnA, combined with Illuminate's Inspect item bank, to gather information about their students in a variety of ways. These include both formative and benchmark assessments, as well as end-of-unit exams. The district also recently began using DnA to administer a social-emotional learning (SEL) survey to elementary students.

Through DnA, prebuilt assessments are available for teachers who don't have time to create their own. However, "we've found that more and more teachers are creating their own tests so they have control over what standards the tests focus on," Wilfong says.

“ Teachers using Google Classroom can just click a button and the DnA assessment is linked to their Google Classroom page. It allows us to do as many assessments as we want. ”

Teachers can go into an item bank and choose questions aligned with the standards they are looking to assess, or they can write their own test questions. "That has been very empowering for teachers," Wilfong says, "because they have ultimate control over their tests and quizzes." Warsaw teachers appreciate the platform's flexibility. "They can use DnA for quick exit tickets, all the way up to interim assessments and final exams," Wilfong notes. "Teachers using Google Classroom can just click a button and the DnA assessment is linked to their Google Classroom page. It allows us to do as many assessments as we want."

Before discovering Illuminate, the district used to struggle to assess its youngest students in particular. "Having them put on headphones and take a test on their own didn't seem to be very effective," Wilfong explains. "Our kindergarten teachers especially wanted to be able to give one-on-one assessments. Illuminate allows teachers to do those one-on-one assessments, and the information goes right into the DnA platform. Teachers don't have to sit and type in the scores at the end."

Interpreting the Data

Being able to quickly and easily collect all kinds of information about what students know and can do is tremendous, but it doesn't get teachers very far unless they know how to interpret the data. This is another area where Illuminate excels.

"There are several pre-built DnA reports that teachers really like using," Wilfong says. "The two go-to reports that most teachers find very powerful are the Item Analysis and the Response Matrix."

Once a teacher gives an assessment, the Item Analysis report shows not only the number of students who answered correctly but also the number of responses for each incorrect answer for every individual question. Teachers can use this information to dive deeper into where students' misconceptions might lie. The Response Matrix shows teachers at a glance which items (and standards) students got right or wrong.

Teachers and administrators can also create custom reports with no special knowledge required. For instance, Warsaw educators have created a custom report converting raw scores into scores on a scale of 0-3, color-coded so that teachers can see quickly which students still need help mastering which standards.

"I used to compile these types of reports in Excel, and it would take me a day or two to pull all of the information from multiple places," Wilfong recalls. "Now, I can do it with no coding or knowledge of Excel—and it takes me about 10 or 15 minutes. It's a huge time saver."

DnA is intuitive and interactive. Because information is presented visually, with stacked bar charts and other graphs, users can see patterns in the data very quickly. "Even our teachers who are a little nervous about using technology find that this tool is simple and straightforward to use," Wilfong observes.

Having all this information at their fingertips "can lead to some very powerful discussions within teacher PLCs," she adds.

Changing the Culture

Because the system is so easy to use, Warsaw educators are administering formative, just-in-time assessments more often to gather valuable feedback that helps drive instruction. “Illuminate allows teachers to do this very easily, without spending a lot of time on the data collection,” Wilfong notes.

The platform’s simple data reporting and analysis tools have also saved teachers and administrators many hours of time. What’s more, teachers can share the assessments they’ve created with one another, making the platform a very powerful collaboration tool.

By simplifying assessment and data analysis, Illuminate’s DnA platform has changed the culture within Warsaw Community Schools.

“Our teacher PLCs are looking at fresh data, not information from a few months ago,” Wilfong concludes. “Getting data into the hands of our teachers immediately in a quick, usable format has been a game changer in our district. DnA has allowed us to focus on examining data rather than collecting them. As a result, we have robust data conversations in our PLCs. Data is now in our DNA.”

To learn more about Illuminate DnA, reach out to [schedule a demo](#).

