

# Dunnellon Christian Academy and Kingdom Academy, FL

## Step Up For Students schools partner with NWEA and see accelerated student growth

At Dunnellon Christian Academy in Dunnellon, Florida, Principal Kristy Wheat was tired of trying to use outdated, complicated student data. “When you are trying to make decisions based on data using a typical standardized test, you get data in the summer when it’s too late to do anything about it,” says Wheat. Dunnellon had been using TerraNova as their annual standardized assessment. Between receiving the results after the students had left the classroom and struggling to explain the significance of the data to parents, they were ready for a change.

Through Step Up For Students (SUFS), a tax-credit scholarship program serving low-income students and those with special needs, Wheat learned of the partnership between SUFS and NWEA® that enables schools to use the MAP® Growth™ interim assessment. MAP Growth measures what students know and what they’re ready to learn next by dynamically adjusting to each student’s performance—whether a student performs on, above, or below grade level.

Since the fall of 2016, the SUFS and NWEA partnership has demonstrated results for participants:

- + MAP Growth assessments have been given in 215 private schools in Florida serving SUFS scholarship students
- + Approximately 25,000 students have been tested
- + Overall the percentage of students meeting or exceeding their growth targets in Math grew from 63% to 76%

Dunnellon is one of the schools benefiting from MAP Growth. “This is real-time data that the teachers and the students can use,” Wheat shares. “Now, I confer with my teachers, and we come up with suggestions for individual kids based on what we see in the MAP Growth results.” Those suggestions have led naturally to teachers differentiating their instruction, which has resulted in above-average growth in math, as demonstrated by NWEA national norms. One of their tenth grade students on a SUFS scholarship scored in the 99th percentile for growth between fall and spring, and at the 96th percentile for achievement on his spring math assessment.

As part of the SUFS and NWEA partnership, both teachers and administrators are offered 20 hours of free professional learning from the SUFS Office of Student Learning. Educators learn to apply MAP Growth reports and differentiate their instruction in response to their student achievement and growth data.

Teachers from Kingdom Academy in Miami participated in the free professional learning, and as a result, their students’ growth accelerated. An impressive 90% of Kingdom Academy’s students in grades 2–5 met growth goals within a typical range as demonstrated by NWEA national norms between fall and spring in math. Elena Navarro, principal at Kingdom Academy, attributes this growth to the increased focus on differentiated instruction. “Using MAP Growth has made my teachers much more data-driven and not just focused on grade-level state

**“Using MAP Growth encourages our teachers to change their own mindset from what they should get done to what the child needs.”**

**Maria Sosa, Assistant Principal**  
Kingdom Academy, FL

standards when they're planning their lessons. They have realized, if students are ready to go above and beyond, then why not? If a student needs reinforcement, then they need to make sure that happens before they move on to the next topic.”

One way that Kingdom Academy does this is through a weekly program called Power Hour:

- + Every Friday from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m., students attend a MAP Growth data-based learning group
- + Using the Learning Continuum report, which provides information on what students know and are ready to learn, teachers chart their student's MAP Growth scores
- + Learning during this time is very hands-on and engaging, and using their scores allows students to make progress more quickly
- + Teachers focus on a skill that corresponds with their score, regardless of grade level

“Students have fun with it, and their learning becomes play!” says Maria Sosa, assistant principal at Kingdom Academy. MAP Growth's learning continuum makes these kinds of groups easy because it breaks down (by a range of scores) the type of skills that students are ready to learn, using the Florida state standards as a source for those skills.

Both principals have seen improved communication around MAP Growth data with parents and students, as well. Wheat says, “The teachers are conferring with their students and parents using the Student Profile report and setting goals with them.” That improved communication comes in part from the ongoing professional learning that SUFS offers. Sosa reports of her teachers, “They all felt that they have a deeper understanding of how the MAP Growth assessment works, how to look at the data, how to communicate that information to the parent, and how to use it to plan a lesson. They no longer just see numbers like they did with standardized tests before.”

Wheat refers to switching to the MAP Growth assessment as one of the best decisions she has made for her school. Sosa explains that using MAP Growth has changed the culture of their school to “one where students' needs come first.” Both look forward to using MAP Growth and continuing to see the impact of teaching what their students are ready to learn.



## SUFS Snapshot

**DUNNELLOH CHRISTIAN ACADEMY & KINGDOM ACADEMY, FL**

### SUFS SERVES

**102,000**

FTC STUDENTS

**1,781**

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

### MAP GROWTH TESTING

**25,000**

STUDENTS

**215**

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

### GROWTH TARGETS IN MATH

**63% TO 76%**

**SUFS**

GROWTH GOALS MET

**90%**

**KINGDOM ACADEMY**

GROWTH GOALS MET (GRADES 2-5)

**83%**

**DUNNELLOH CHRISTIAN ACADEMY**

GROWTH GOALS MET

### SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDED

FLORIDA TAX CREDIT  
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (FTC)

GARDINER SCHOLARSHIP (PLSA)

### TARGET

LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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