ADVANCED
COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

From Classroom Silos to Shared Ownership of Student Learning

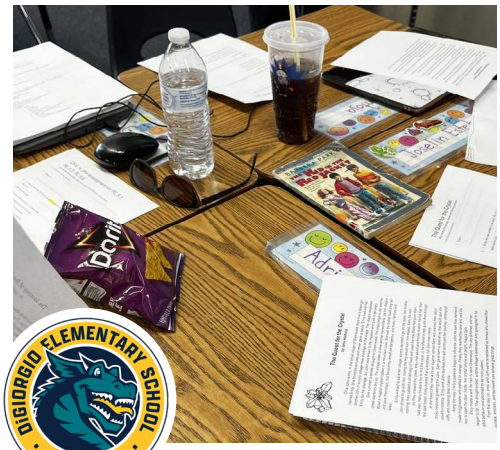
Di Giorgio School District
Arvin, California

How Di Giorgio School District brought singleton teachers together to build a collaborative, teacher-led approach to assessment and instruction.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Di Giorgio School District is a small, rural, single-school district serving 204 TK–8 students in Arvin, California, in the southern San Joaquin Valley. The school has one teacher per grade level and has served multiple generations of the same families over the decades.

- One teacher per grade level, TK through 8th grade
- Nearly 100% socioeconomically disadvantaged students
- 96% Hispanic
- About 24% English learners
- A multigenerational school community with deep family ties to the campus



A reading passage and common formative assessment ready for a reading literature cycle in a Di Giorgio classroom.

CHALLENGE

In a school with one teacher per grade level, every teacher is a "singleton." For years, Di Giorgio's teachers planned, taught, and assessed largely on their own.

"When I first started here about eight years ago, everybody was kind of just in their own pod," says Abigail Kenefsky, a former special education aide and classroom teacher who is now the district's Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA). "For so long, everyone had been like, 'This is my classroom. I'm the only one here. I don't have anyone to work with.'"

The isolation created what Kenefsky calls "a silent struggle." Teachers shared frustrations, but had few opportunities to work together on solutions. Three times a year, staff gathered to review district benchmark data, often looking at printouts without a clear process for deciding what to do next. Classroom assessments were similarly disconnected from instructional decisions. **"It was just, let me check this box of giving a test because it's after the story in this book that I'm teaching from," she says.** Meanwhile, student achievement remained below expectations, particularly for English learners and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Without a clear way to interpret the data and respond, low scores began to feel inevitable.

"We saw all the red and all the zeros, but there was no understanding of where to start to fix it," says Kenefsky. Under the leadership of former Principal Jennifer Allen, Di Giorgio began looking for a new approach. Allen prioritized building collective teacher efficacy and creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration. The district partnered with Advanced Collaborative Solutions (ACS) in 2024-2025 to help singleton teachers work together, use short-cycle assessments to inform instruction, and develop shared ownership of student learning through the Achievement Teams framework.

IMPLEMENTATION

The ACS partnership began with standards. On Steve Ventura's first visit, he led staff through the process of deconstructing standards. For many teachers, this was unfamiliar territory. Before they could begin collaborating around assessment data, they needed to understand why teachers across different grade levels should be looking at standards together.

The answer was vertical alignment. "Even though we're only one teacher per grade level, kindergarten is working on story elements just like eighth grade," says Kenefsky. "It's just more developmentally appropriate for each grade."

Seeing how skills build across grade levels gave teachers a reason to collaborate. They organized into three grade-span teams (TK–2, 3–5, and 6–8), giving each singleton colleagues with whom to examine standards, discuss instructional strategies, and address shared challenges.

Building collective teacher efficacy became an early priority, reflected in a phrase staff now repeat at almost every meeting: At Di Giorgio, each teacher owns one-tenth of a student's education. "It reminds us that we all have that same goal, we all have a part, and we are all capable of making positive change," says Kenefsky.

Responsibility for developing common formative assessments (CFAs) shifted gradually. Initially, Kenefsky created assessments for every grade. Next, she worked with one teacher from each grade span to develop them. Today, teachers create their own assessments.

TARGET OUTCOMES

- **Build meaningful collaboration among singleton teachers.**
- **Develop collective teacher efficacy and shared ownership of student learning.**
- **Establish a repeatable process for designing short-cycle assessments and using results to guide instruction.**
- **Shift responsibility for assessment development from one leader to the teaching staff.**
- **Build internal capacity to sustain the work through leadership changes.**

Each assessment cycle begins with district priority standards. Grade-span teams examine how those standards build across grade levels, develop assessments, and plan instruction together. After administering pre-assessments, teachers analyze the results, identify learning gaps, and select shared strategies to address them.



Pre- and post-assessment results for every grade, TK through 8th, line the cafeteria windows so students can see their progress all year.

As Di Giorgio's teachers became more confident in leading the work, ACS gradually reduced its on-site support. When Gina Black became principal, she brought an established relationship with Ventura, who had served as her superintendent in Edison during the early days of his Data Teams work.

"Starting out, they were with us almost once a month. Then they started meeting with us less and less," says Black. "Now we are functioning within our school without ACS, and they are checking in on our progress."



A Di Giorgio educator walks colleagues through how her team connected learning targets, standards, and CFAs during an Achievement Teams session.

> "What I've learned from ACS is that the assessments aren't about the students. They're more about what we as educators are doing in the classroom. Which is using formative assessments for instructional feedback. Retraining our brains to know it is okay to change our teaching. Teachers are sending me pictures of their new lessons and sharing strategies in schoolwide meetings—even teachers who never used to share." *—Abigail Kenefsky, Teacher on Special Assignment, Di Giorgio School District*

RESULTS

Achievement Teams has changed how Di Giorgio's singleton teachers collaborate, develop and use assessments, and engage students in their own learning. Key outcomes include:

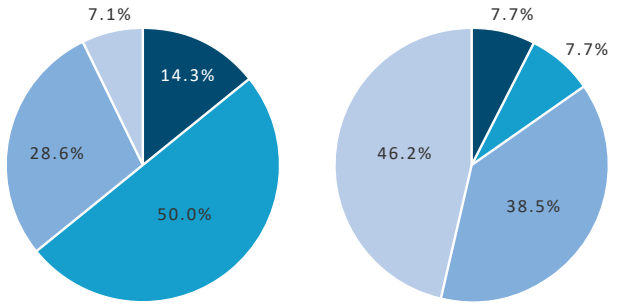
- **Teachers Solving Instructional Challenges Together:** On a recent short constructed-response task, the third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers noticed that students across all three grades weren't using text evidence to support their answers. Rather than addressing the problem separately, they selected a shared strategy for teaching students to cite textual evidence. "That was a perfect example of what we're trying to do," says Kenefsky. "We're aligning those strategies and choosing them together."
- **Teacher-Owned, Purposeful Assessments:** Short-cycle CFAs have replaced check-the-box testing, and teachers now develop their own assessments. They plan instruction around specific learning targets rather than simply moving through textbook lessons. "Teachers feel like they have more ownership, they're more excited, and they feel more prepared to prepare the students," says Kenefsky.
- **Higher Expectations for Student Learning:** The assessment cycles helped teachers look beyond low overall scores to identify what students could do and where they needed additional support. For example, students

demonstrated an understanding of multiple-choice questions but needed more practice organizing and explaining their thinking in writing. "Now everyone's noticing they're not that low," says Kenefsky. "They're capable."

- **Students Taking Ownership of Their Progress:** Pre- and post-assessment results are displayed in classrooms and in the cafeteria, making learning goals and progress visible throughout the school. Staff members reinforce those goals in everyday conversations, and Kenefsky says nearly any student in first grade and up can explain what the assessments are for. Some teachers also share assessment charts with families through ClassDojo.
- **Open Classrooms and a Willingness to Take Risks:** Teachers who once worked behind closed doors now share strategies, invite colleagues to observe their instruction, and ask for feedback. "We've become a place where teachers can say, 'I haven't really tried this strategy, but can you come watch? Give me some pointers,'" says Kenefsky. "Before, that was never a thing. It was always 'my door is closed.'"

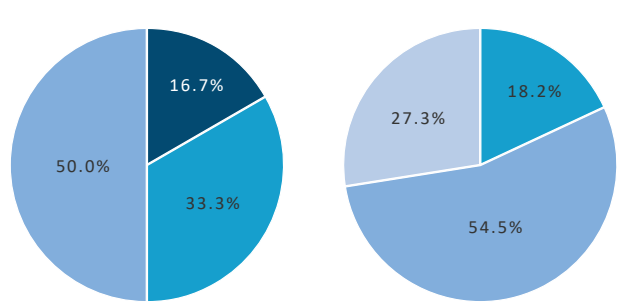
The work is also beginning to show up in state results: From 2025 to 2026, Di Giorgio moved from red to yellow on the California School Dashboard.

Di Giorgio School District
GRADE LEVEL: KINDERGARTEN



- Pre-assessment date: September 9, 2026; Post-assessment date: September 30, 2026
- The original SMART goal: "The percent of Kinder students scoring proficient or higher in RLI1,3,6 will increase from 36% to 86% by the end of September 03, 2026 as measured by CFA 2 administered on September 30, 2026."

Di Giorgio School District
GRADE LEVEL: TK



- Pre-assessment date: September 9, 2026; Post-assessment date: September 30, 2026
- The original SMART goal: "The percent of TK students scoring proficient or higher in RLI1,3,6 will increase from 50% to 83% by the end of September 03, 2026 as measured by CFA 2 administered on September 30, 2026."

SPOTLIGHT:
A SECOND-YEAR TEACHER WHO TEACHES LIKE A VETERAN

Di Giorgio's kindergarten teacher is only in her second year in the classroom, but she's already become a strong advocate for CFA cycles, using them across subject areas.

"If you put her next to a 15-year teacher from a different district, you wouldn't know that our kindergarten teacher is only in her second year," says Kenefsky.

"Kindergarten is the foundation, and she's been doing amazing."

MOVING FORWARD

After several years with ACS, Di Giorgio's teachers have made Achievement Teams part of their instructional practice. Despite changes in school leadership, the work has continued, with teachers taking increasing ownership of the process. "It's just part of their teaching now," says Kenefsky. Although the schoolwide focus remains on ELA, some teachers are already conducting CFA cycles independently in math and science.

The next phase is being shaped by teachers themselves. During a schoolwide reflection, staff asked for more CFA cycles and opportunities to observe colleagues teaching in real time. In response, Di Giorgio is doubling its ELA cycles from four to eight this year and introducing Learning Labs, where teachers model instructional strategies with students and reflect together on what works. The goal, Kenefsky says, is to show that "teaching isn't someone standing in the front. Teachers facilitate the learning, and it's really how you facilitate students to teach each other."

Looking ahead, Di Giorgio plans to expand CFA cycles schoolwide into math, building on work already underway in individual classrooms. Principal Black also wants to strengthen instructional strategies that support English learners.

ADVICE FOR SMALL DISTRICTS

For other small schools where teachers have no same-grade colleagues, Kenefsky offers three lessons:

Be willing to be vulnerable. "You have to say and hear some hard truths, but know that it's all coming from a good place, and that it's for the students."

Go slow to go fast. Meet teachers where they are, even if that means starting with why collaboration matters before diving into assessment data.

Commit to the whole process. "When you work on all the parts of Achievement Teams, it really works. I don't think any of that would be possible unless we did every part of it right."

ABOUT ADVANCED COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT TEAMS

Advanced Collaborative Solutions is a professional development and consulting group that provides consulting services to schools, districts, and non-profit organizations globally specializing in instructional leadership, collaboration, assessment, and goal setting. Achievement Teams™ is an experiential and effective four-step protocol developed by ACS centered around Collective Teacher Efficacy — a shared belief that educators can have a greater impact on student achievement when they work together. Within Achievement Teams, educators look at student data to make decisions about instruction and teaching practices that need to shift to best meet student needs. Achievement Teams ensure continuous improvement and better student outcomes by providing a structure for teachers to collaboratively reflect, identify areas of need, and select optimal instructional approaches to respond to those needs.

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