



ADVANCED
COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

Achieving Academic Excellence with Achievement Teams in Washington Unified School District

Washington Unified School District
Fresno, California

*How Achievement Teams' focus
on collaboration and collective
teacher efficacy catapulted a
unifying California district toward
alignment and academic success.*

DEMOGRAPHICS

Washington Unified School District (WUSD) is a diverse public district serving K-12 students in rural and urban communities of Fresno, CA and consists of the following schools: American Union Elementary School, West Fresno Elementary School, West Fresno Middle School, Washington Union High School, and WUSD Alternative Education Schools.

- 133 Teachers
- 2,567 Students
- 46% Free and reduced lunch
- 78% Hispanic/Latinx
- 7% African American
- 8% Asian/Pacific Islander

CHALLENGE

Prior to unifying the school district in 2015, Washington Schools in Fresno, CA grappled with fragmented processes and misalignment across K-12 classrooms. Although the district had implemented a local protocol for data collection and analysis, the lack of a unified approach hindered collaboration, student growth, and instructional improvement efforts. With leadership changes and new principals at various school sites, maintaining momentum and fostering a consistent focus on student data analysis became a critical challenge for the district. In an effort to **create greater cohesion in academic programming and the student experience**, John Sherron, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, along with the district team, **adopted Achievement Teams district-wide as means to cultivate a truly unified academic system that ensured growth for all learners.**

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of Achievement Teams in WUSD has been a multi-year endeavor driven by John Sherron and Steve Ventura's collaboration. After working with Steve and ACS as a school principal and seeing firsthand the impact that effective Achievement Teams have on staff culture, instructional expertise, and student performance, one of John's first decisions as WUSD Director of Curriculum and Instruction was to reconnect with Steve and double-down on Achievement Teams as a district-wide model.

The district strategically scaffolded Achievement Teams initiatives across several years to set educators up for success and ensure continuous improvement each year. In year one, the district focused on introducing the Achievement Teams protocol district-wide and conducting minimum two data cycles per semester at every school site. With ongoing training and certification events, more and more Achievement Team leads and school administrators were confidently equipped with the necessary knowledge to run effective collaborative protocols in pursuit of academic growth. In year two, WUSD leadership partnered with Steve and ACS to deepen understanding of high-impact instructional strategies and high-priority standards. Through multiple site visits where Steve directly coached and supported classroom educators and leaders, John and team leveraged valuable insights to further improve student achievement. In fact, Steve met with each department and grade-level at every school site during visits to build connection and investment in the Achievement Teams process. Going into year three, the team will focus on refining high-impact instructional strategies and better preparing students for assessment rigor during learning. Further, WUSD has expanded Achievement Teams certification each year, with over 50% of staff expected to be certified going into the 2023-2024 school year.

TARGET OUTCOMES

- Foster a unified K-12 approach focused on frequent student data collection and analysis
- Enhance teacher collaboration and instructional strategies
- Improve academic outcomes for students



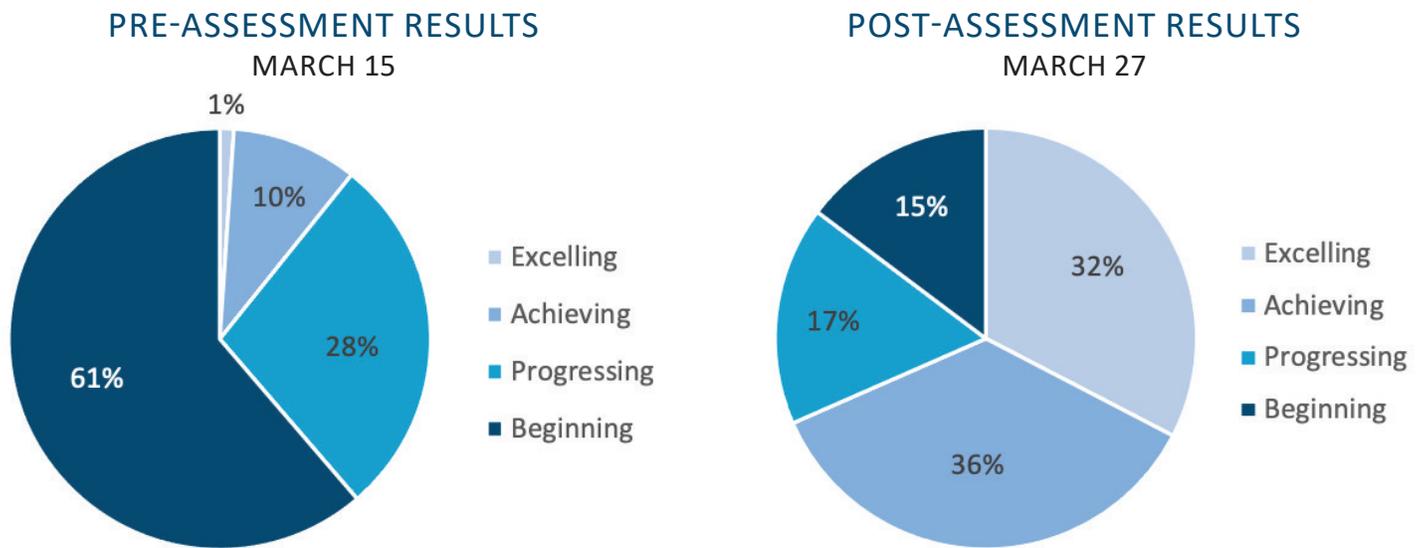
“A big shift has been that our teams truly want to work together. They want to come together at professional development, they want to talk to their colleagues and they want to talk about their craft. That right there is something that’s always positive. In the past, teams may not have wanted to meet together because maybe the team dynamics weren’t the greatest or thinking ‘I have a lot of things to do’ so now to see Achievement Teams and PLCs wanting to meet, that’s a great sign right there.”

- John Sherron,
Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Washington Unified School District

RESULTS

The implementation of Achievement Teams has already yielded positive changes and promising academic results in WUSD. Some of the key outcomes include:

- **Improved Formative Data Analysis and Response:** The district implemented Achievement Teams and utilized the data cycle process, resulting in significant gains in formative data analysis. Teachers reported seeing consistent improvements between pre- and post-data cycle assessments. This has led to improved student performance on district benchmark assessments.



The original SMART goal: The percent of 2nd-grade students scoring proficient or higher in Writing 2.3 will increase from 11% to 39% by the end of March 29, 2023, as measured by Narrative Writing administered on March 27, 2023.

In less than two weeks through one Achievement Team cycle, the percentage of students scoring proficient in narrative writing increased by 57%, going from 11% to 68% and greatly exceeding the initial student growth goal by nearly 30%.

- **Early Literacy District Benchmarks:** While data collection was occurring at the secondary level more regularly, elementary (in particular lower elementary) grades at WUSD did not utilize data cycles to their full potential. However, the Achievement Teams protocol has led to positive gains in kindergarten through second grade students entering third grade on or above reading level.



While student growth is the ultimate goal, Achievement Teams have also led to **stronger staff culture and collaboration**.

- **Positive Feedback and Increased Certification:** Feedback from site administrators, leaders, and teachers has been overwhelmingly positive. Steve Ventura's visits and collaboration with the district have been fruitful, fostering a supportive and productive environment. The number of certified teachers has steadily increased, with over 50% of teachers expected to be Achievement Teams certified by the upcoming school year.
- **Improved Collaboration and Instruction:** Achievement Teams have enhanced collaboration among teachers, who are now more eager to come together, discuss their craft, and actively participate in data protocols and PLCs. This shift has led to a more unified approach to instruction and a greater focus on data analysis to inform high-impact teaching practices.

Moving forward, the district anticipates continued growth and positive impacts from the ongoing implementation of Achievement Teams. As the district refines its assessment practices and strengthens the identification of highly effective instructional strategies, WUSD expects to see even greater improvements in academic outcomes for students, enhanced collaboration among staff, and a data-driven culture that prioritizes student success. Further, with a clearer instructional and data culture across the district, students feed into middle and high schools with stronger academic readiness.

“Every time we get together with leads, we hear positive feedback after Steve's visits... He's easy to work with. That's key. Whenever you have an 'outsider' coming in, there's always a little bit of hesitation, but Steve is genuine, down to earth, easy to work with, can call you out on something without making it uncomfortable, so overwhelmingly it's positive feedback and our educators want to work with him. It's a testament to him that we have 45 teachers signed up for this summer's certification, so we're close to 50% of teachers and nearly all administrators certified in Achievement Teams.”

- John Sherron,
Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Washington Unified School District

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.

