

# Resource Reallocation to District Priorities

## Case Study: Marblehead improves differentiated supports for students at the Village School.



### Executive Summary

- Despite a decrease in enrollment, Marblehead Public Schools experienced an increase in students with disabilities from 2013 to 2017.
- Marblehead decided to improve differentiation and small group instruction at their Village School, the district's intermediate school (grades 4-6) to address student needs.
- The district won a DESE grant to cover some of the start-up costs associated with implementing changes, but the district also had to reallocate other resources to make the investment sustainable.
- The district and school tracked the impact of their investment through a staff survey, formative intervention assessments, and the number of special education referrals.
- After the RTI initiative's investments, 96% of staff reported that they understood their roles in the RTI process, and the vast majority also indicated increased comfort in delivering small group instruction.

### FAST FACTS

Marblehead  
Public Schools

SY 2016-17

Schools

7

Teachers

264

Students

3,114

SWD

19.3%

### District Leadership

**Eric Oxford**, Special Education Director

**Amanda Murphy**, Village School Principal

**Stephen Gallo**, Asst. Principal, Village School

**Rebecca Brand**, Interventionist

**MaryEllen Hart**, Interventionist

### Case Study Authors

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### Resource Reallocation to District Priorities Grant Program

A competitive two-year program supporting school districts to make substantial changes in resource allocation and direct more resources toward evidence-based improvement strategies. This grant program also encourages districts to use the new suite of Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR) tools to analyze how they use resources.



## Overview of Grant

This case study is one of nine in a series showcasing the work of recipients of a 2017 DESE two-year grant for reallocating resources to align with district priorities. The case study explains how the participants used state data tools such as RADAR and DART to identify an area of need, determined an evidence-based investment, shifted resources in their existing budget to make the investment, and then evaluated the cost and impact of the investment.

### *Planning: The Village School in Marblehead shifts to meet student needs through differentiation and targeted support*

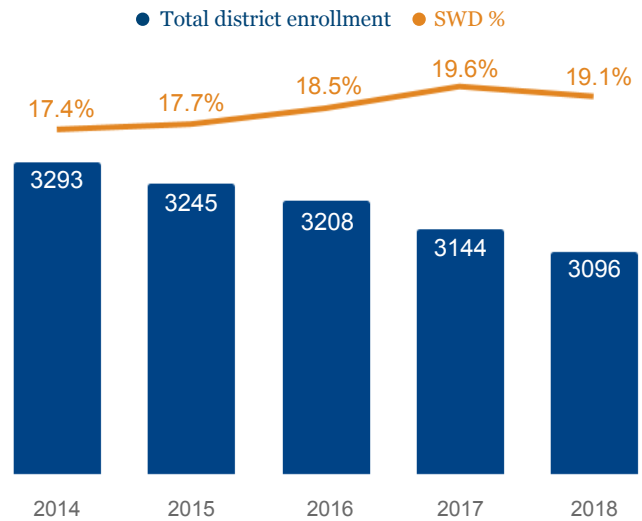
From 2013 to 2017, Marblehead Public Schools saw an 8% increase in students with disabilities (570 to 616), despite a 3% decline in enrollment. Schools were referring more students for special education evaluation and identification than in the past. Leaders wanted to better equip teachers and staff to support struggling students in their classrooms by providing targeted interventions and systematizing a process of formative assessments and close review of student data. The district applied for a DESE grant to fund this work.

District leaders, including the assistant superintendent, decided to target their work at the Village School, Marblehead’s intermediate school. The focus at the Village School was on supporting staff in providing differentiated instruction to students through a school-wide Response to Intervention (RTI) system. Within this, the school implemented three six-to-eight week intervention cycles in which students were identified for intervention on specific standards based on formative assessments, then provided with small group instruction and reassessed at the cycle’s end to see if they had mastered the standard.

This process began during 2016-17 with the implementation of the intervention cycles, and through small and deliberate steps school and district leaders worked to implement more ambitious changes over the next few years. In 2017-18, the Village School RTI team, consisting of the principal, assistant principal, and interventionists, led the school’s work by working with teachers on how to review student data, find targeted interventions, and provide small group instruction. Teachers already met weekly in professional learning

### **Exhibit 1 | Marblehead Enrollment**

Total district enrollment (students) and students with disabilities (% of total enrollment) over time



communities, and the team repurposed two meetings a month to focus on a review of student data and differentiation through small group instruction. The RTI team also participated in PLC meetings, did classroom observations, and provided coaching, modeling, and feedback to teachers. The school chose Galileo assessments as the tool to implement the intervention process.

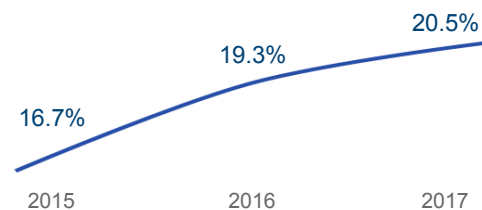
In 2018-19, the Village School rolled out a new schedule that allowed for intervention and flexible groupings of students in the same grade. The team hired a consultant, Martha Starr, to provide additional professional development and coaching to teachers on co-teaching, differentiation strategies, small group instruction, and the use of data. She conducted observations of class-

### **Exhibit 2 | The Village School**

*Exhibit 2.a Total enrollment (students)*



*Exhibit 2.b Students with disabilities (% of enrollment)*



rooms, modeled for teachers, and provided real-time feedback. She and the RTI team worked with teachers on increasing collaboration across classrooms, encouraging teachers to model for one another and review each other's data to learn new strategies. The interventionists and administrators covered classes when necessary to encourage cross-classroom collaboration, observations, and coaching.

Throughout the grant's two years, the leadership team encouraged staff culture that was collaborative, data-driven, and student-focused. "This has been about getting people on board and building buy in," noted one team member.

### **Measuring: District leaders assess the impact on staff and student outcomes**

As a part of the grant program, Marblehead and Village School leaders collaborated with District Management Group and DESE to evaluate the efficacy of Marblehead's investments in differentiation and RTI at the Village School. They established definitions of success, or outcomes they wanted to see in 2018-19:

- 85% of teachers self-report an increase in comfort and knowledge of RTI on staff survey.
- 75% of students receiving math interventions meet standards on end-of-cycle formative assessments.
- 75% of students receiving ELA interventions meet standards on end-of-cycle formative assessments.
- Referrals for special education students decrease in 4th and 5th grade in 2018-19, compared to the prior year.

The team then set out to gather data. In February 2019, the RTI team administered a survey to evaluate staff comfort and knowledge of the school's RTI system of assessments, data review, and small group instruction. The special education team also collected special education referral data across two years. Finally, the team mapped and calculated the costs associated with their investment. Grant funds helped cover some start up costs, including hiring a consultant to restructure the school's schedule, provide professional development to staff, and purchase licenses for Galileo. However, leaders repurposed staff time to sustain this change in practice. As part of the grant, the team set out to determine the fully loaded cost of their initiative, using a structured protocol to capture expenses such as teacher and administrator time, substitute coverage and op-

erational costs. Overall, the Village school has a total budget of about \$3,000,000, a majority of which goes to staff; it is estimated that about 15%, or \$450,000, was repurposed to focus on this work with staff and students. Of existing meeting time, about 30% has been repurposed towards this work. The resources repurposed for this initiative translate to approximately a \$700 per pupil investment, based on the number of students impacted.

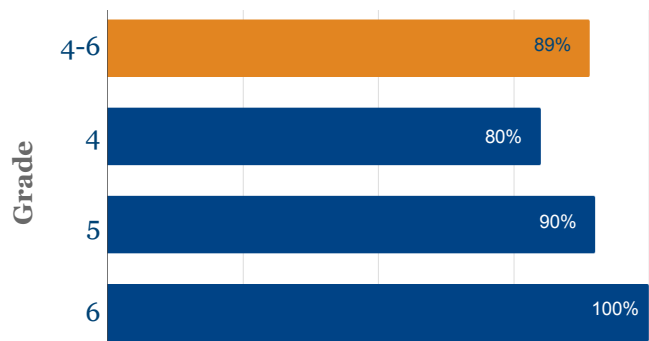
### **Evaluating: Marblehead reviewed the results of their RTI investments**

District and school leaders saw the initiative gain momentum through 2017-18 and 2018-19, including an increase in teacher comfort not only with differentiation and small group instruction, but also with modeling for other teachers and collaborating to provide what's best for students. This was reflected on the staff survey, demonstrating an overall shift in culture at the Village School.

**Staff survey results:** 96% of staff at the Village School agreed or strongly agreed that they understood their role in the RTI process, with 64% strongly agreeing. 100% of staff agreed that data was used to identify students for interventions, and 86% agreed data was used to monitor students as a part of classroom based instruction. Finally, most staff agreed that they felt more comfortable with small group instruction (89%) and with looking at data (86%) than they did 18 months ago.

### **Exhibit 3 | Staff Survey Results**

*Percent of teachers (2018-19) reporting that they agree or strongly agree with the statement: "My comfort level with small group instruction has increased over the past 18 months."*

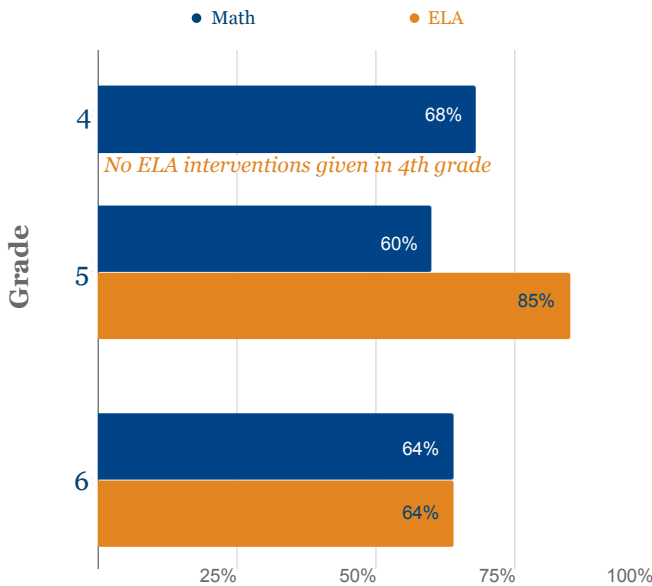


**Impact of intervention cycles:** Of all students receiving intervention during the first two cycles in 2018-19, 71% demonstrated proficiency on the intervention

standard assessment. In ELA, 79% of students met proficiency on standards, whereas in math, 64% of students met proficiency on standards.

**Exhibit 4 | Impact of Intervention**

*Percent of students receiving interventions meeting standards on end-of-cycle assessments (2018-19)*



**Special education referrals:** Between 2017-18 and 2018-19, the Village School saw a 15% reduction in special education referrals, from 41 in 2017-18 to 35 in 2018-19. This remained true when controlling for enrollment. However, leaders at the school level were cautious to attribute changes in one year to this initiative alone and hope to review future years’ data before drawing conclusions about reductions in special education referrals.

**Looking ahead: The Village School sustains focus on differentiation and small group instruction**

At the end of 2018-19, school and district leadership saw promising results at the Village School and believe that the work around intervention cycles has gained traction and momentum among staff. Leaders will continue the work, building upon the foundation established in the prior years.

Leaders will continue their work in three areas: (1) meeting students’ needs through co-teaching and small group instruction, (2) impacting student learning, and (3) fostering a positive, engaging, and collaborative school culture.

As they continue into 2019-20, one leader said “This has been all about the small steps that lead to the big changes. We’re keeping our focus there.” Another observed that “We’re shifting from asking teachers ‘are you doing small group instruction?’ to ‘what is happening in your small groups?’”

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