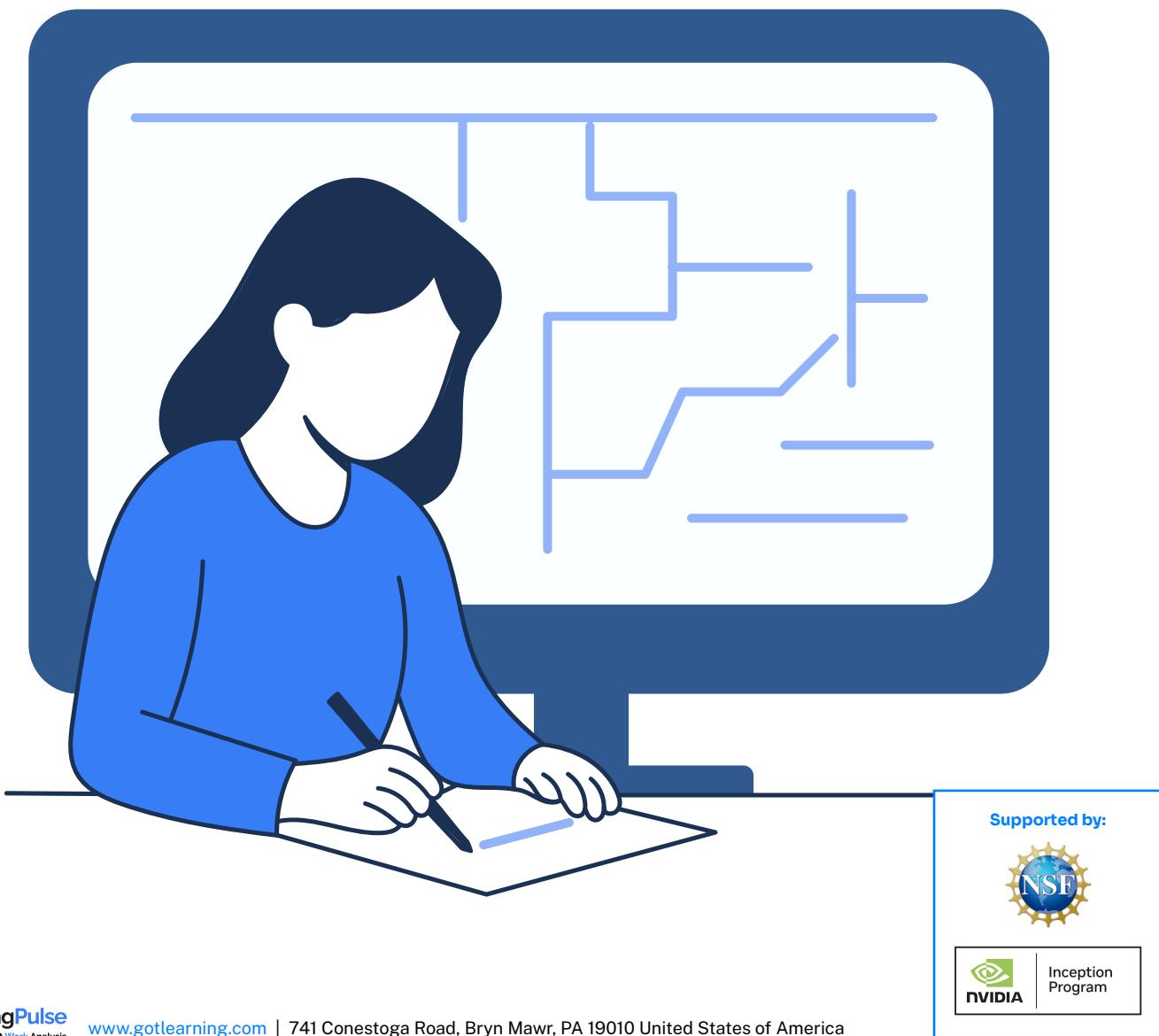# Case Study: The Agnes Irwin School
Using LearningPulse to Analyze Student Work and Strengthen Curriculum Alignment

Overview

The Agnes Irwin School is a leading independent PreK-12 girls school known for its strong academic program and deep commitment to understanding each student's growth and learning. With experienced and dedicated faculty and a well-defined curriculum, the school has long prioritized thoughtful instructional design, inquiry, and reflective professional practice.

During a focused pilot in the middle school, the Assistant Head of School, Middle School Director, and the English Department partnered with LearningPulse to answer a specific, high-impact question: **How well are our students progressing as writers across their middle school experience when viewed through the school's learning progressions, not just through grades or isolated samples?**

To capture their learning and growth over time, middle school students completed quick writes across 3 modes of writing (narrative, informational, persuasive) during the first two weeks of school serving as an initial benchmark. Later in the year, students produced additional writing that allowed the English Department to assess growth over time comparing their writing to the quick writes. The team used LearningPulse to analyze the student work across all different configurations from class level, grade level, and all MS students. LearingPulse enabled them to analyze a large volume of writing quickly, then segment insights by cohort, especially by grade, to understand how students were progressing relative to expectations in the school's writing learning progressions.

As Dr. Elizabeth Rossini, Assistant Head of School, explains:

> "A key area of focus for us is to ensure we are consistently assessing where our students are in their learning throughout each unit or learning module. The amount of original work generated by students each day is impressive and tells the story of their learning and growth. Trying to use that rich data in a purposeful and effective ways was proving insurmountable when you consider the task across a full class or a full teaching load. With LearningPulse a teacher can examine their entire class set of work in mere minutes. The analysis can simply be a summary of how students are doing or it can include teaching points that are useful next steps. It is a game changer."

The Challenge:

As part of a five-year plan to enhance coherence across its PreK-12 program, The Agnes Irwin School developed a comprehensive curriculum framework centered on clearly defined curricular goals. These goals articulate what graduates need in order to be successful and outline the skills students must develop from PreK through Grade 12. This framework allows teachers to understand both where students are headed and what they should prioritize within their current grade or course.

Dr. Rossini describes the opportunity, and the practical barrier to acting on it consistently: "Teachers make critical decisions every day about the content they present to students aligned to the school's curricular framework. With the curriculum framework now in place, we can more easily review and refine our assessment practices and pedagogy, which is what great schools do. Additionally, we can look more holistically at how well our program choices are serving our students. However, the challenge of deeply examining qualitative student work is too time intensive to be a regular practice."

For the middle school English Department, this challenge was particularly acute. Writing is produced frequently, in multiple forms, and across multiple classrooms. The English Department had a clear sense of what strong writing looked like, and a desire to calibrate expectations and instruction to the school's writing learning progressions. Compiling and analyzing enough authentic student writing to confidently evaluate student learning across courses and grades was time-intensive and nearly impossible to do at scale.

Choosing LearningPulse

LearningPulse was created by one of Agnes Irwin's teachers as a way to better understand student learning, particularly growth over time. When the leadership team first encountered the platform, they were immediately struck by its speed and potential.

Dr. Rossini recalls her first reaction:
"I was amazed that it could analyze the entire middle school's writing in a matter of minutes. Our team was able to ask a multitude of questions that looked at the student work in different ways. We received detailed analysis in real time that was next to impossible to do before."

As Agnes Irwin considered using LearningPulse with the middle school English Department, several critical factors guided the decision. The first was privacy.

As Dr. Rossini notes:
"Agnes Irwin is very concerned about student privacy especially in the era of AI. We don't want to make our student data available outside of our school, and we were excited to know that student data are encrypted at rest and in transit and not shared with any third parties such as Google, OpenAI, or Anthropic."

A second key factor was the ability for the school's own curriculum to drive the analysis. LearningPulse's Curriculum Context Engine allows schools to upload their own curriculum documents, ensuring that all analysis is aligned directly with institutional goals rather than generic standards. This capability was a major differentiator for a writing-focused pilot grounded in the school's learning progressions.

The third factor was the ability to easily ingest large volumes of student writing. A single set of quick writes or on-demand pieces can represent hundreds of pages of qualitative evidence across a grade, and that volume grows quickly when comparing multiple data points from across the year.

Implementation and Use

The Agnes Irwin School was the first institution to implement LearningPulse. The rollout included onsite training and ongoing support via Zoom, with the LearningPulse team working closely with administrators and the middle school English Department throughout the pilot phase.

Dr. Rossini shared how quickly the team saw value in practice:
"One administrator told me, 'I was able to get answers to what I was curious about, where our students were in their learning in the moment, providing time to make important adjustments.'"

The middle school pilot followed a clear growth-over-time workflow:

1 Benchmarking with first–week quickwrites

In the first week of school, English teachers collected quick writes that provided a baseline snapshot of student writing. Because these quickwrites were already part of classroom practice, teachers did not need to redesign instruction or add new assessments. LearningPulse then analyzed the writing at scale and identified patterns aligned to the school's writing learning progressions.

2 Cohort analysis by grade

The leadership team and English Department used LearningPulse to segment findings by grade-level cohorts. This enabled them to see where a cohort, as a whole, was meeting expectations and where common gaps emerged relative to the school's progression benchmarks.

3 Comparing early writing to later writing

Later in the year, the department uploaded additional writing and compared it to the beginning-of-year benchmark. This made it possible to identify growth trends, areas of acceleration, and skills that appeared to remain challenging across the cohort.

4 Instructional and programmatic reflection

With cohort-level insights, teachers and leaders could identify where to refine instruction, where to adjust performance tasks, and where to strengthen alignment to the writing learning progressions. Additionally, the data helped the school leaders to identify possible gaps and/or redundancies in their curriculum.

Dr. Rossini describes how the findings could either validate direction or prompt refinement: "Sometimes LearningPulse confirms that we are on track. Other times, it alerts us to the need to revisit certain skill areas and/or adjust the curriculum to strengthen specific skills."

She also emphasized the flexibility that made the pilot usable for both teachers and leaders: "One of the amazing features of LearningPulse is the ability to examine qualitative student work across any cohort size that is needed — across multiple grades, across a full grade, across a full class, or across multiple pieces of work for one student. This flexibility supported the questions we were seeking to answer and provided invaluable insights."

Results and Impact

LearningPulse exceeded expectations in both speed and depth of analysis.

As Dr. Rossini puts it:
"We were surprised how quickly it analyzed large amounts of student work. We know what questions to ask, we just needed a tool to support doing this work in a timely and efficient way and during the learning process, not at the end. It is not just a data platform, it is a thought partner for administrators and teachers."

For the middle school English Department, the impact was practical and immediate. The team could analyze writing growth across a full grade and see cohort-level and/or individual student strengths and needs. Teachers could calibrate expectations using a shared view of student work aligned to the school's writing learning progressions. Leaders could support department conversations with clearer evidence of how writing skills were developing across the middle school. Comparing early writing to later writing also made growth visible in a way that traditional grading practices and limited samples often cannot.

Advice for Other Schools

Dr. Rossini encourages other schools to consider this approach:
"I would recommend that other schools use a platform like LearningPulse to analyze student work in real time, " she advises. "It gives administrators and teachers a new way to assess where their students are in their learning at that specific moment."

When asked what it would mean if Agnes Irwin could no longer use LearningPulse, Dr. Rossini's response was clear:"We would be missing out on a transformative technology that helps us better understand where our students are in their learning during their learning."

She also emphasized the importance of privacy:
"We cannot overstate how critical it is that LearningPulse does not share our student data with any third parties. That trust allows us to use it with confidence and integrity."

Summary

Through this middle school writing pilot, the Assistant Head of School, the Middle School Director, and the English Department used LearningPulse to do something that was previously out of reach: benchmark writing early, analyze large amounts of writing across grade-level cohorts, compare growth over time, and ground department and leadership conversations in authentic student work aligned to the school's writing learning progressions.

Dr. Rossini summarizes the value and the promise:
"LearningPulse has been a great tool. It is very new and there are features we seek, knowing the promise of what it is to become is the most exciting to us. The LearningPulse team is led by educators who are creating a tool that is aligned to what really matters in schools, student learning, and growth over time."

Interested in a free LearningPulse tryout?