

How a District Pilot Tracks Student Growth to Strengthen Its Instructional Decisions

What if your best learning data aren't from a state test, but from today's lesson?



Overview

[Pascack Valley Regional High School District](#) in Montvale, New Jersey, serves about [1,700 students in grades 9–12](#). The district focuses on authentic, performance-based learning. This includes lab reports, essays, and inquiry tasks that show how students think.

District administrators wanted a clearer view of how daily learning links to long-term growth. Traditional data sources like tests, benchmarks, and grades didn't show student growth over time in the same way student work did.

Pilot Snapshot

- Setting: Pascack Valley Regional High School District (grades 9–12)
- Pilot participants: A cross-disciplinary committee of approximately 30 educators
- Initial focus areas: Science lab reports and ELA writing tasks (pilot cohort)
- Goal: Identify trends in authentic student work faster so teachers and district leaders can act while learning is happening

The Challenge:

Daily Student Work Was Rich... But Slow to Identify Trends

Challenge

Pascack teachers like Dr. Dave Frangiosa (science) and Brett Conrad (English/AP Seminar) already had strong instructional routines in place. They often assign essays, labs, and reflective tasks. This writing provides them with great qualitative data, but the volume is hard to manage.

- Dave could inform students about their progress, but checking over 100 lab reports to spot class-wide gaps took hours or days.
- Brett wanted to support 100+ students in writing without repeating the same feedback and without having AI "do the writing" for them.
- Administrators wanted to know: "Are students improving on the skills we teach across sections — not just, 'Did this one student get good feedback today?'"

Feedback was happening, albeit slowly, but visibility was not. Everyone could see what happened on a single assignment. Almost no one could see how learning evolved over time.

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What if Feedback and Visibility Finally Moved at the Same Speed as Student Work?

Pilot Outcomes Snapshot

In a limited pilot with participating science and ELA educators, LearningPulse helped the team turn authentic student work into clear, actionable insights while learning was still happening.

- **Faster time to insight:**
Patterns and misconceptions surfaced in minutes instead of requiring hours of manual review.
- **Clear instructional next steps:**
Teachers could see what to reteach, what to reinforce, and which students needed small-group or individual support based on the work itself.
- **Growth over time visibility:**
Teachers could track how student performance changed across multiple assignments and use that evidence to adjust instruction and feedback.

Choosing LearningPulse

Pascack decided to pilot LearningPulse with a committee of ~30 teachers in multiple subject areas. Megan Graziano, District Supervisor of Science & Technology Education, shared her motivations.

"Assessing student learning in a high school setting presents many challenges, particularly when it comes to analyzing open-ended student responses on assessments and lab reports. LearningPulse's AI-powered analysis has allowed teachers to efficiently evaluate student responses, detect learning trends in real time, and immediately address misconceptions — and it gives administrators the ability to analyze data across grade levels and cohorts."

The pilot group didn't need a tool that spit out grades. It needed a tool that:

- Analyzes authentic student work (labs, essays, explanations)
- Rolls up the analysis so teachers can see patterns instantly
- Rolls it up again so pilot leaders can see patterns across participating classes and departments.

Faster Feedback Loops Break the Cycle of Pretending to Learn

Whether it's a single essay or a districtwide assessment, delays in feedback create the same problem. You can't act on what you can't see.

In a classroom, a student can [look confident while missing the concept](#). Across a district, delayed test results have the same disguising effect. When data arrive months later, administrators are forced to react to outcomes that should have been guiding them all along.

Pascack's Results of Using LearningPulse

Dave shared how LearningPulse helps him shorten the timeline on student misconceptions. "If I have all my students submit a lab today, I can see, okay, 80% of them are at the proficient level in their conclusion, but I only have 20% proficient in experimental design."

He also values the longitudinal view. "I love the growth-over-time reports," he said. "LearningPulse pulls examples from previous labs to show where the student started and how they've progressed. It's a great report to share with students and parents. It lets them see both how much they've grown and where they need to focus next."

For Teachers

That instant visibility changes how Dave teaches, too. In fact, he says, "I couldn't really tell you what I'm doing tomorrow until I see how the kids respond. With LearningPulse, what once took hours or days now takes minutes, so I can adjust my instruction in real time."

For Administrators

The same visibility and pattern-tracking that guides Dave's next lesson also supports administrators with district planning. At scale, those same growth insights inform MTSS reviews, IEP updates, and curriculum planning. Administrators get a clearer picture of how skills develop across classrooms and grade levels. Now they can see learning evidence as it occurs, not just afterward.

For Students

The shorter feedback window changed how students learn, too. Brett saw anxiety give way to confidence. "LearningPulse eases their learning burden. They're so much more receptive to feedback because it feels less punitive and critical and more like 'Oh, this is how I get better.'"

Those same patterns help Brett fine-tune his writing instruction across classes. "I can quickly see if my students are struggling to organize evidence or develop claims," he explained. "It's like getting an instant snapshot of where my next mini-lesson needs to go."





Reaction and Judgment Give Way to Proaction and Growth

The same is true at the district level: when data arrive in real time, it supports improvement instead of judgment. Teachers, administrators, and students alike can focus on growth rather than reaction. And, in education, isn't that the whole point?

Both Dave and Brett see the same realization when patterns become visible. For Dave, "My students saw they made the same error three times in a row in a growth-over-time report. Seeing it in black and white means they're more receptive to feedback. " The students don't hide behind pretending anymore; now they engage in progress. And Dave and Brett's energy now goes toward the teaching that only they as humans can do.

The shorter feedback loops also help them stay calibrated. Dave shared, "LearningPulse keeps me in check. It's another set of eyes that doesn't get fatigued by the 100th paper. " And Brett sees the downstream impact. "I'm not bogged down by giving the same feedback over and over again. LearningPulse can do that for me. It allows me to innovate more, to be more responsive and interact with students more as individual learners."

Dave put it this way: "If feedback arrives while the learning is still happening, you're more effective. " For their students, learning becomes true progress rather than pretense.



Students Don't Show Growth on Test Day. They Show Growth Every Day.

The clearest evidence of student learning is in the steady progress that happens between lessons and tests. But without visibility into that daily growth, districts are left chasing proof instead of cultivating it.

Districts have long struggled with the tension between high-stakes testing that reveals proficiency and the daily work that shapes it. Student achievement is measured through revised paragraphs, analyzed lab reports, and two-minute desk conferences. Those moments feel small in comparison to the weight of state assessments, but *they are the system*.

We spend over 180 days gathering evidence of learning. Then we wait for a yearly test to see if students actually retained what they learned months ago. The data we trust least arrive fastest. And the data we trust most sometimes arrive too late to shape the outcome.

Through this pilot, Pascack Valley explored how to bring more visibility to the learning evidence already present in daily student work. District leaders have heard the promise of real-time data before, and this pilot tested what is possible when insight arrives in time to shape instruction. Technology does not change outcomes on its own, but timely visibility helps educators respond while learning is still happening. As Dave explains, "Shortening that feedback loop is critical. If I can get as close to real-time data as possible, the more effective I am going to be as a teacher." This serves as a powerful reminder:

"Actionable insights from a class set of lab reports or other written work that would take me hours or days, I can now have in minutes. It allows me to adjust my instruction in real time."

Districts already have the people to change outcomes; they need the visibility to act before learning moves on.

LearningPulse makes learning visible while there's still time to adjust, support, and stretch. Teachers feel energized by their work again. Students feel progress as it's happening. Administrators move intentionally and strategically. And that's how student achievement changes, from the inside out.

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