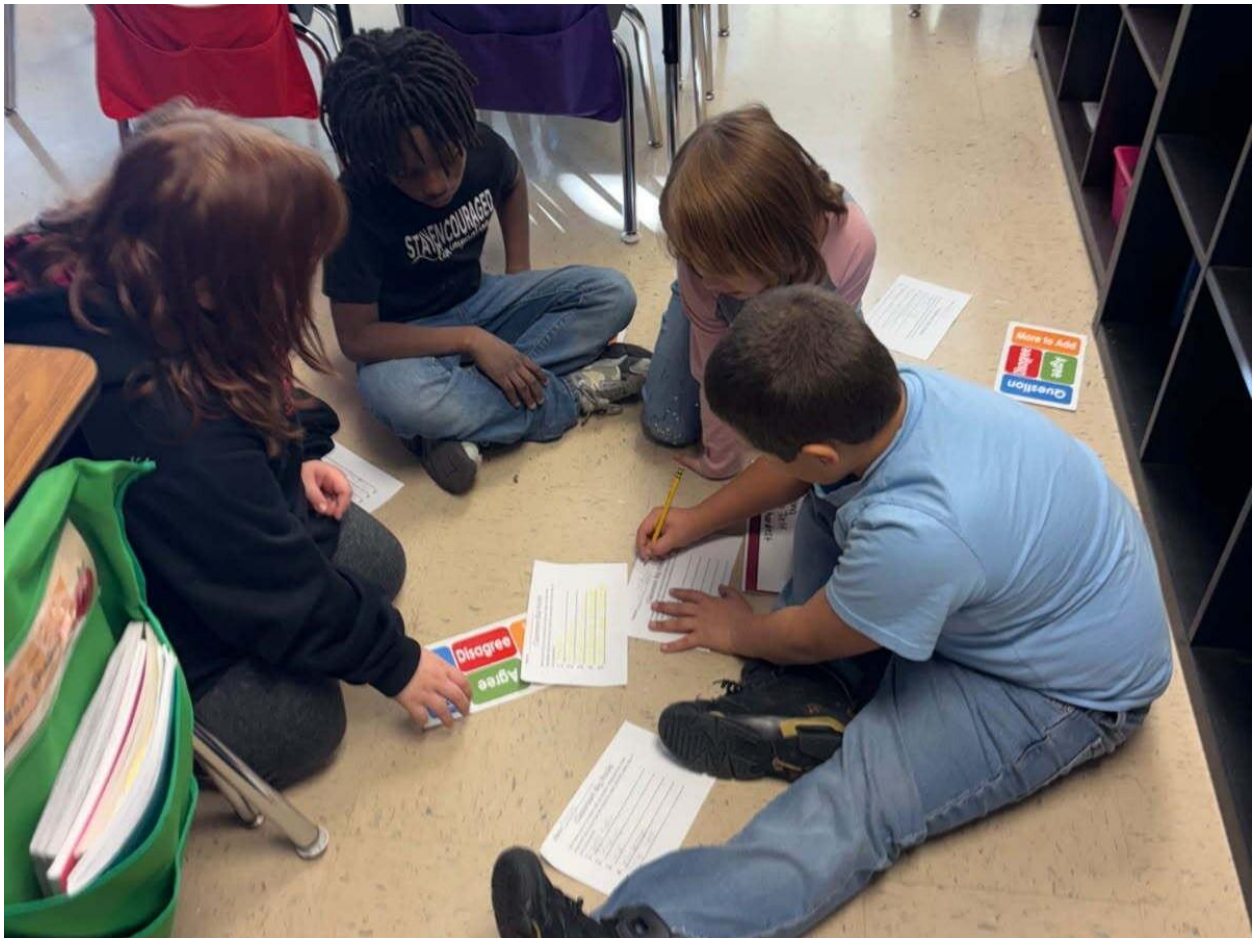


How Cedar Rapids Raised Rigor and Student Achievement in One Year

A Districtwide Case Study of RigorWalk® in Action



Students engage in rigorous, team-based learning after Cedar Rapids Community School District adopted RigorWalk.

At the start of the 2024–25 school year, Cedar Rapids Community School District—Iowa’s second-largest district, serving more than 14,500 students across 31 schools—launched a districtwide effort to strengthen Tier 1 instruction and increase student achievement.

As part of a broader partnership focused on implementing the Model of Instruction for Deeper Learning®, the district adopted the research-validated RigorWalk as its common instructional metric. Across all schools, RigorWalk provided leaders with a consistent way to measure instructional rigor, identify trends, predict student achievement, and monitor progress toward improvement goals.

Building Momentum Through Focused Implementation

Early RigorWalk data revealed a pattern of low-rigor Tier 1 instruction, inconsistent alignment to state standards, and limited evidence of deeper student learning.

School and district leaders partnered with teachers to act on these insights right away. By the fourth week of school, leadership teams had engaged in 410 classroom walkthroughs focused on learning together about instructional practice. Each administrator committed to at least 10 walkthroughs using RigorWalk every two weeks, creating a steady flow of real-time insights to support teaching and learning.

RigorWalk reports automatically surfaced high-leverage focus areas. School instructional leadership teams set measurable 45-day instructional goals and used walkthrough data to monitor progress. Walkthrough data directly informed coaching priorities and professional learning across the district.

Instructional leadership capacity also strengthened. Monthly principal meetings included dedicated time to analyze data. District leaders reviewed RigorWalk trends across schools, identified priorities, and ensured districtwide alignment.

As Dr. Maura Hobson, Chief of Schools & Curriculum at the time, shared with the Board of Education:

“Leaders are getting into classrooms, really seeing the instruction happening, and that’s important so we know what’s happening and how we can continue to move forward in the district.”

The Results: Growth in Rigor and Student Proficiency

Over the course of the year, RigorWalk® data showed substantial growth in instructional rigor:

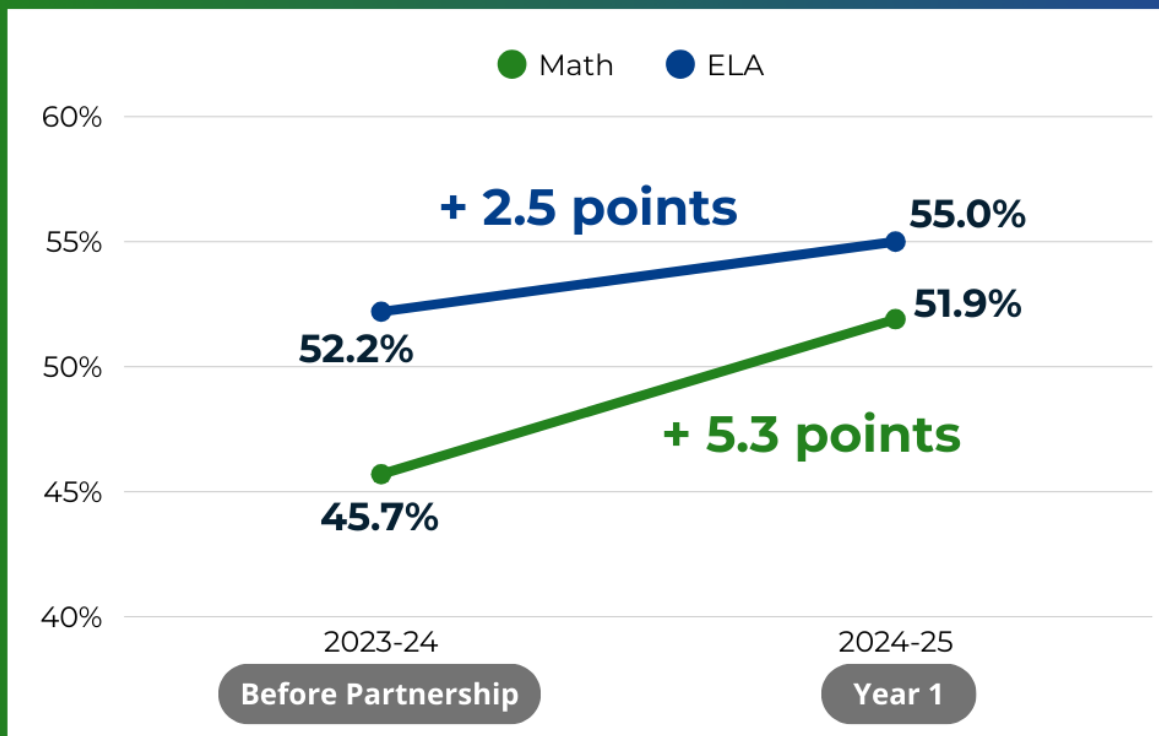
- 40% average growth in evidence of learning targets aligned to standards
- 50% average growth in evidence of student learning aligned to the learning target
- 33% average growth in evidence of student teaming in classrooms

As instructional rigor strengthened through focused implementation of the Model of Instruction for Deeper Learning and consistent monitoring through RigorWalk, student outcomes improved.

In just one year, the district saw measurable gains in proficiency, including:

- A **5.3 percentage point increase** in math proficiency districtwide
- A **2.5 percentage point increase** in ELA proficiency districtwide
- Math iReady scores exceeded the national norms by **25% in grades K-5** and **83% in grades 6-8**
- Gaps closed, with one of the highest-implementing schools achieving **double digit point gains (+12-36 points)** for Black students, students with IEPs, and English Learners across ELA, math, and science.

Districtwide Proficiency in Cedar Rapids Improved in 1 Year



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“When instructional barriers come down and engagement goes up, achievement follows. That is exactly what we are seeing across CRCSD.”

- Dr. Tawana Lannin, Superintendent, Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD), Iowa

For a deeper look at the implementation and results, including attendance and behavior improvements, read the full Cedar Rapids case study.

What This Means for District Leaders

In Cedar Rapids, instructional rigor became a measurable, districtwide priority. RigorWalk provided the visibility and consistency needed to monitor instruction across 31 schools. Teachers and leaders strengthened classroom practice through instructional clarity, professional learning, and coaching.

In the first year of implementation, RigorWalk® indicators improved—and achievement followed. The district has continued into Year 2, building momentum around rigorous, standards-aligned instruction.

Bring Rigor and Results to Your Students

RigorWalk is a research-validated predictor of achievement, with increases translating to approximately 4–6 point annual school proficiency gains. Over 800 schools have completed more than 250,000 classroom walkthroughs, including districtwide adoption in some of the nation’s largest school systems.

If raising achievement across every classroom is your priority, explore how RigorWalk can provide predictive insight.

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