

## PHASE II: Selecting High Quality Instructional Materials

### Roosevelt Union Free School District

Roosevelt Union Free School District (RUFSD) is a large suburban district serving 3,376 students across five schools. Its student population is 30% Black, 69% Hispanic or Latino, 1% other and 100% of students receive free food at school. RUFSD began working with Education Elements in August 2021 to develop a comprehensive reopening plan during the pandemic and the work deepened to include imagining a new teaching and learning process using high-quality instructional materials and focusing on whole child development. Dr. Deborah L. Wortham has had two stints as Superintendent of Roosevelt Union Free School District, but the current one coincides with troublingly low student achievement and district schools qualifying for Comprehensive and Targeted Support and Improvement by the state of New York. With nearly the entire district consisting of students of color, Roosevelt school teachers and leaders recognized that cultural relevancy was missing from much of the standard curriculum that most states and districts line up to purchase every few years. The RUFSD School Board directed Dr. Wortham to develop a “Roosevelt Curriculum” consisting of high-quality instructional materials that better reflected the community’s culture and this moment in time where we as a society are navigating through multiple pandemics — disease, racism, violence, and environmental crises.

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**“With the Board’s directive, I knew the new Roosevelt model would have to include exposing our students to rigorous content, but the seasonal adoption of new texts was not going to be enough,”**

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explained Dr. Wortham. “I don’t have time to tell parents to come back in three years and we will be better.”

With this urgent focus on equitable instruction, Education Elements facilitated focus groups where teachers, leaders, families, and students were able to share their perspectives on equitable instruction. Ed Elements also engaged school and teacher leaders through a guided review of existing instructional materials to identify the most important components of high-quality instructional materials for RUFSD. They helped the district work on a shared vision for personalized instruction and consistent expectations for curriculum maps, including introducing materials on representation that are inclusive and welcoming for all learners.

Education Elements helped design training and cross-departmental collaboration so all teachers eventually would become equipped to use the new materials. Those professional development opportunities were specifically designed to accommodate staff needs and preferences, including the establishment of “office hours” where teachers would get direct support on an instructional challenge. Dr. Wortham believes that, “The curriculum does not fail, it is the teaching that fails - you must believe that students can handle the content, regardless of what it is.”



Based on successful teacher response, RUFSDA has scheduled two 3-day seminars with Education Elements for the summer to help map curriculum for the coming school year. Again, before addressing content, the seminars will focus on shifting instructional practice to be more personalized and whole child focused.

“High-quality instructional materials are the basis for creating systemic stamina for learning...but they are not a standalone! It always leaves room for I taught it and you did not get it. In order to have high student achievement, we have to set the atmosphere for learning and collective efficacy - that is what makes the absolute difference.” Dr. Wortham

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**Based on an interview conducted with:**  
Dr. Deborah L. Wortham Superintendent  
Roosevelt Union Free School District. 240  
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## A Curriculum Case Study



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A woman with short brown hair, wearing a green and white plaid shirt, and a man with short dark hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, are looking at a laptop. They are in a library with bookshelves in the background.

## PHASE III: Prioritizing Professional Learning

### Rochester School District

Rochester School District (RSD), an 11-school district serving 4,400 students in suburban New Hampshire - 55% FRL - has been working with Education Elements since 2016 to help realize its vision to personalize learning “... because everyone deserves to be engaged and passionate about their Personalized Learning journey to ensure success.” Recent work with EE has focused on how to intentionally build professional learning for teachers and leaders as the district rolled out new curriculum, while maintaining a deep commitment to Personalized Learning.

In the past, teachers would often spend hours after school creating their own lessons, searching for instructional materials and assessments. In some ways this allowed creativity and customization, but it led to a lack of consistency in the student experience and learning between Rochester’s classrooms and among it’s schools — and, critically, it led to exhausted teachers.

“I know that when I was teaching and I was so worried about finding materials and lessons, I could not really focus on student learning,” explained Heidi Zollman, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Coach at RSD. “Teachers only have a certain amount of time and it’s critical for them to be able to focus on the students in front of them, developing relationships with students, families, building communities, and diving deep into student data...this is key to effectively personalizing learning.”

In 2021, RSD moved to bring in high-quality instructional materials for a new core reading program, but needed to find ways to help teachers develop Personalized Learning instructional strategies within the guardrails of the new, consistent curriculum. RSD needed to align its professional learning strategies for personalization and engagement with its new HQIM.

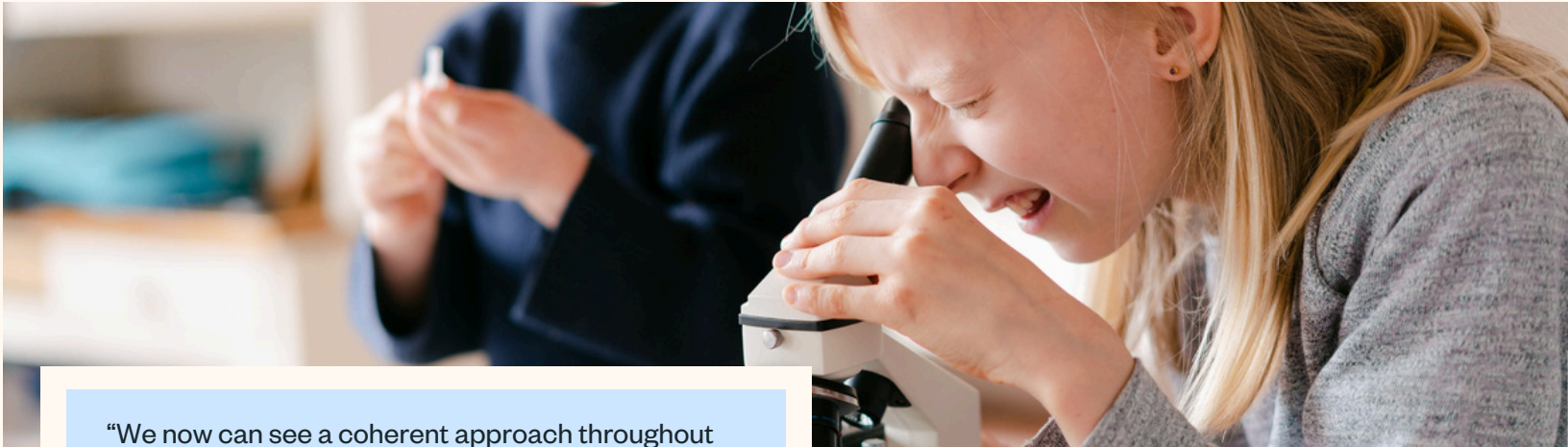
So, Education Elements met with the publisher of the new materials and the RSD team to align understanding and to begin designing personalized learning strategies that teachers could use with the curriculum. Each school at RSD had PL leaders who got trained by Ed Elements. Those leaders in turn trained teachers at their schools during weekly early release sessions. There were also half- and full-day PD sessions at the district, with recorded sessions available for asynchronous teacher learning.

Education Elements collaborated with teacher trainers to help RSD strengthen its personalized learning practice while achieving a consistent curriculum for K-5 schools.

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**““Never have I seen kids reading like they are at this time in the year.” - Heidi Zollman, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Coach at RSD.”**

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“We now can see a coherent approach throughout our K-5 schools,” said Heidi Zollman. “Teachers know what they are teaching and where their kids should be, AND there is student engagement and data-driven, personalized instruction.” The new reading core program has shown immediate jumps in student success, especially with the younger students. In the National mCLASS Comparison: BOY to MOY 21-22, the number of students at or above national benchmark increased across all 4 grade-levels. This is especially impressive in light of the disruptions to schooling during the COVID pandemic.

“Never have I seen kids reading like they are at this time in the year.” - Heidi Zollman, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Coach at RSD.



Recent learning walks among teachers and leaders have provided positive reinforcement and a celebration of the hard work teachers have done to align their personalized learning strategies with the new core curriculum. RSD’s next step is offering direct coaching with the core program next year. Teachers will have the option of co-teaching with a coach, or letting a coach teach a session and watching.

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### **“We addressed the challenges of aligning our personalized learning instructional practices with the new district-wide**

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“Ed Elements was really adaptive and flexible to our needs,” said Heidi Zollman. “They helped us ensure all stakeholders (including administrators and leaders) were involved as we addressed the challenges of aligning our personalized learning instructional practices with the new district-wide curriculum.”

#### **Based on an interview conducted with:**

Heidi Zollman Director of Elementary Education  
Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Coach  
Rochester School District

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## PHASE IV:

# Creating Structures for Collaborative Lesson Internalization, Planning, Practice

### Fresno Unified School District

Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) serves nearly 70,000 students in central California, with approximately 18.5 percent of its students being English Learners and 88 percent identified as Socioeconomically Disadvantaged. Since 2018, FUSD has partnered with Education Elements to bring Personalized Learning to the district as a way to prepare students with knowledge, skills, and dispositions to navigate a digitally-infused, dynamic, and interconnected world. The district uses high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), but has learned that the higher the quality of the materials, the more support teachers need to collaborate, internalize lessons, plan, and practice.

In making the shift to PL and an intentional use of technology to improve student outcomes, the district faced numerous challenges including school and system leaders without sufficient knowledge of how pedagogy, technology, content, and skills can be moderated to accommodate teacher strategies and students' learning experiences. There was also an issue that "guaranteed and viable curriculum was perceived as the textbook rather than a process of tasks shaped by student learning objectives, based upon agreed-on content like digital resources, and informed by data," explained Phillip Neufeld, Executive Officer, Information Technology at FUSD.

"We wanted to focus on what the student's learning objective was and then work backwards to how to design the instructional task and then focus on what were the materials we need and how digital resources could support those learning tasks.

The district knew that blended teaching practices using HQIM and personalized learning experiences yielded statistically significant improvements in SBAC scores and i-Ready scores. The question was how to develop professional learning opportunities for educators to best support changing teacher practice and accelerate student learning.

FUSD created a unique partnership between its Information Technology team and Curriculum and Instruction team to align professional learning around the use of edtech and PL, with Education Elements supporting them to ground the PD in the HQIM the teachers were using in the classrooms, not just pedagogy. "We set up communities of practice that emphasized the intentional use of technology and effective use of collaboration; designing tasks that build future-ready skills as well as use learning analytics," said Phillip Neufeld. The district set up cohorts of teachers who could work and learn together, with sessions

**Based on an interview conducted with:**

Phillip Neufeld Executive Officer, Information  
Technology Fresno Unified School District



The district set up cohorts of teachers who could work and learn together, with sessions and collaborative spaces that offered both synchronous and asynchronous options. Educators had the opportunity to regularly and consistently collaborate with each other on real instructional problems of practice using real materials from the classroom. District leaders offered time during the school day and outside of school for teachers to prepare, do lesson planning, and really internalize how to use HQI as part of their PL instructional strategies.

“Our goal was to change teacher practice that would in turn impact student learning,” Phil Neufeld stressed. “We wanted to create structures that would allow teachers and students to be designers, action researchers, and owners of their teaching and/or learning.” The district shared that just two 2-hour PLI professional learning sessions led to on average 6% gains on SBAC student scores. Working with Education Elements they developed a thoughtful approach to providing teachers the space to collaboratively internalize and plan for instruction that was grounded in the high-quality instructional materials teachers leverage .

FUSD has over 1,000 teachers going through the professional learning sessions designed with Education Elements. “EE made sure that our context was honored. They honored how we talked about things so it felt authentic, and a safe thing for us as we worked to make this big shift to PL,” said Phil Neufeld. everyday.

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