

Wildflower School

Avondale Elementary School District, Goodyear, AZ



What is it about the professionals and families that call Wildflower their academic home that has made such a substantial impact on student achievement? Their commitment and belief that every student can meet their reading potential.

For students who are struggling, the Wildflower educators and staff use data to identify the specific area of struggle, provide immediate support, and monitor progress towards reaching an improvement goal.

Teachers, paraprofessionals, and staff believe so strongly in this approach for student success, they have applied the same frame to their work. Students receive this support with reading, and teachers receive this support with professional development.



Interviewers/Editors:
Terri Clark, Sean Ross, Sarah Bondy
Writer: Kristin Borns

Wildflower's Approach to Student Achievement

Just four years ago, Wildflower entered a state-mandated school improvement cycle. Today it is recognized as an "A" school. Since 2014, Wildflower has been the beneficiary of strong leadership that mobilizes teachers, paraprofessionals, and families. With a strong focus on on-going data review and application, the Wildflower academic team not only has responsibility for improving student achievement but is empowered to use data to drive that improvement.

A small group of teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and a parent gathered to discuss Wildflower's literacy strategies. One of the pivotal components of their AZM2 (formerly AzMERIT) improvement identified by the group was leadership. The current principal joined Wildflower four years ago and was described as visionary in the desire to build a strong literacy system with the "full buy-in" and top-to-bottom engagement of teachers and instructional specialists. The principal meets weekly with each teacher and has a specific system to review the progress for all students currently at risk. The group shared the principal is supportive and approachable for students and staff alike.

The group highlighted how critical the ongoing review, understanding, and application of data is to impacting student achievement. They shared they examine data frequently in a variety of

different teams. Within grade-level educators meet to examine data; across-grade level groups examine data; educators and parents come together to understand data. Data is gathered, updated, and analyzed in real time. Teachers frequently meet with the principal and these meetings are data-driven and the talk is often "kid-specific." The Wildflower team also recognizes it is critical these improvements hold and are committed to using data to ensure that happens.

Teamwork between teachers and paraprofessionals was also described as part of Wildflower's "secret sauce." Teachers provide the skill-specific interventions needed and set the course and direction with leadership. Paraprofessionals then collaborate and work directly with students addressing the specific needs of those at benchmark, approaching benchmark, or who are at-risk. Cross-grade teams are critical as Wildflower's philosophy is achieving reading

Data in Action

A key area of focus for Wildflower has been engagement in the 1st grade. The team – through DIBELS progress monitoring – saw a clear gap and came together within and across grade levels to address the concern.

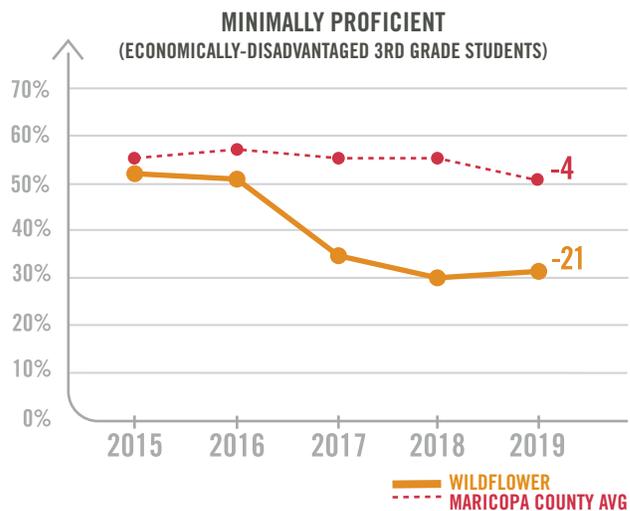
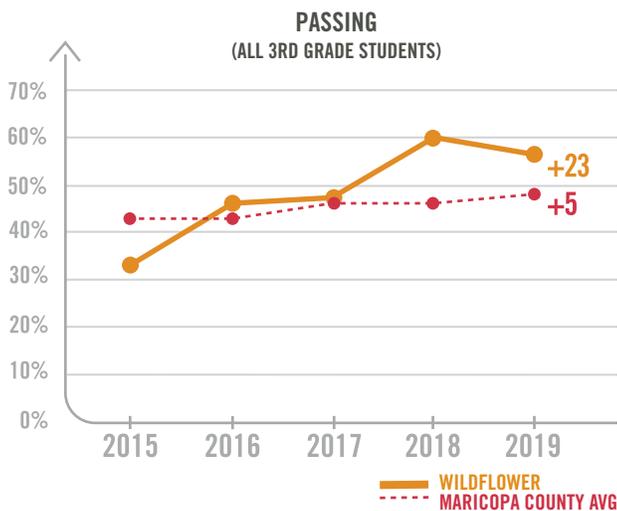
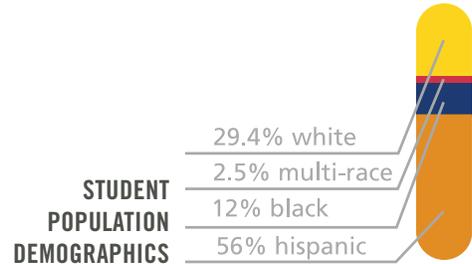
They continue to monitor real time data to ensure scores continue to hold.



Wildflower: By the Numbers

23 point increase in third grade students passing AZM2 ELA (proficient and highly proficient).

21 point decrease in economically disadvantaged students scoring minimally proficient.



Grades: **PK-8**
 Enrollment: **485**
 Full Day K: **Yes**
 Title I: **Yes**
 Free-and-or-Reduced Lunch: **60%**
 Read On Community: **Yes**



Students feel noticed, successful, and celebrated, and teachers work to build student relationships in small group settings.

proficiency by third grade begins in kindergarten. These teacher and paraprofessional teams are often led by reading specialists on campus who help guide the conversation around data.

This skill- and student-specific approach includes a strong focus on reading and writing and a large commitment to instruction that centers on these skills. DIBELS progress monitoring is ongoing. All students benefit from small-group instruction, working daily with their classroom teacher, and also two paraprofessionals. On average, Wildflower students have 2.5 hours of reading, with a specific focus in text in class every day.

There is a commitment to continuous professional development that mirrors the commitment to student learning. Wildflower has a yearly focus, meets regularly, and uses data not only to drive student achievement, but to drive professional development. This has included working and development over summers when needed. For example, staff utilized the summer to examine their core reading program for gaps and built a new curriculum map to address those gaps in the following school year.

Wildflower also engages parents as partners in their children's success. Every year the school hosts a parent night to translate DIBELS scores and hosts monthly parent nights to focus on a variety of topics. Wildflower seeks to invite and include parents if tutoring is needed for their student. Parents always have the authority to determine if their child will participate in on-site tutoring. If they opt out, they are asked to pledge—and resources are made available—to provide this extra tutoring at home. A parent who participated in the group discussion shared she felt very much included and supported in providing reading support to her children.

Finally, Wildflower's school climate was identified as a key to their success. All participants shared that, regardless of a student's home environment, there is a continuity of care they receive at school. Students feel noticed, successful and celebrated, and teachers work to build student relationships in small group settings. School administration knows students and students demonstrate care and respect with one another within and across grade levels. Visible impact has been observed by the school psychologist who shared negative school-wide behaviors have minimized in part because all students are seen in small groups and are able to build bonds and relationships with multiple teachers and aides.

Move On When Reading Literacy Plan:
Wildflower School

Literacy Programs:

1. Core Reading Program: Wonders (McGraw Hill)
2. Reading Intervention Program: Foundations (Wilson)
3. Writing Program: Units of Study by Lucy Calkins (Heinemann) and Write From the Beginning... and Beyond (Thinking Maps)

Instructional Time:

Reading: Two hours per day
 Writing: 1/2 hour each day

Professional Development:

Weekly grade-level and PLC meetings
 Summer curriculum development work

Coordinated strategies and school and community engagement are making a difference for students at Wildflower School in Avondale. Visionary leadership buoyed by a strong, experienced team with high ownership and engagement, informed by real-time data, and driven by educators and parents is moving the needle on student achievement.

Examining Census data for the community surrounding Wildflower:

22% of the population is between 5 and 17 years old; compared to **18.1%** in Maricopa County

27.6% of the community population lives below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level; compared to **34.2%** of the Maricopa County population

Median household income is **\$63,393**

Source: MapLIT ACS 2013-2017, 5 year data for Wildflower School and Maricopa County profile.



Working Together—Making an Impact

We would like to thank all of the Wildflower team members above who participated in the case study interview.

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