

# HOW ONE SCHOOL TURNED EARLY TESTING INTO A STUDENT SUCCESS ENGINE

INSIDE PURCELL MARIAN HIGH SCHOOL'S DATA-POWERED APPROACH THAT'S TRANSFORMING READINESS STARTING FRESHMAN YEAR



Founded in 1928, Purcell Marian High School is a Catholic parochial school in Cincinnati, Ohio, with a proud tradition of serving a highly diverse body of nearly 400 students, including a growing Latino population. An International Baccalaureate school since 2019, Purcell Marian has embraced the EdChoice program, which allows families to send their children to non-public schools, further enhancing the school's diversity and reach.

The school's testing coordinator, Patricia Clancy, fully understands the need for comprehensive student readiness and academic data to not only guide students' academic journeys but also to bolster the school's state accreditation status. Purcell Marian has long offered state-funded ACT testing to juniors, as well as PreACT testing to sophomores. Recognizing the value of early assessment, the school began testing freshmen with PreACT 8/9 assessments in 2018 — equipping the school with additional years of longitudinal, baseline academic data for crucial curriculum, guidance, and navigation decisions while ensuring its students are on track to graduate.

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Patricia Clancy  
Testing Coordinator  
Purcell Marian High School

## DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Purcell Marian administers online testing for PreACT 8/9, PreACT, and the ACT. The ability to access and analyze the resulting score data quickly has allowed Clancy and other educators to identify gaps in student learning and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. For example, the school uses Iowa Assessment competency scores in math and English as a graduation requirement. Clancy has discovered that PreACT performance often matches Iowa Assessment scores, so PreACT scores can be used to adjust curriculum and teaching to help students do well on the Iowa test before graduating.

PreACT and PreACT 8/9 data have also been instrumental in supporting students' academic growth. By identifying areas where students struggle, teachers can provide targeted interventions and support. This approach was particularly beneficial in addressing learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having student data at the micro and macro levels makes the accreditation process smoother and more robust. “We can pull data from the last several years for state accreditation,” Clancy says. “We can download the data, make a spreadsheet, compare with other assessment results, and make charts. Previously, we had to pull data from wherever we could find it. With ACT, there has always been data online.”

**FROM FRESHMAN YEAR TO SOPHOMORE YEAR, PREACT-TESTED PURCELL MARIAN STUDENTS FROM THE CLASS OF 2028 HAVE EXPERIENCED A 20% SCORE INCREASE IN MATH AND READING SCORES.**

## **PREPARING STUDENTS FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES**

Purcell Marian’s commitment to preparing students for their futures is evident in its comprehensive approach to college and career readiness.

- The school has established a college and career department that uses PreACT and ACT data to guide students in their postsecondary planning — including college but also professional fields like manufacturing and entrepreneurship.
- The school offers student workshops to help develop test-taking skills and reduce anxiety before taking PreACT and the ACT. Clancy says many freshmen and sophomores understand and value the benefits of performing well on the tests and are excited to participate in workshops to help prepare them for test day.

As Purcell Marian continues to innovate and adapt, the use of PreACT 8/9 and PreACT remains a cornerstone of its strategy to ensure that all students are well-prepared for the challenges of college and beyond. The school’s successes are a testament to the power of data-driven decision-making and the dedication of its educators to student achievement.



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