



# Groton's Early Career Teachers See Gains in Student Achievement

BetterLesson & Groton CSD



“The benefits of BetterLesson Coaching are clear. We’ve seen new teachers who can get their kids to achieve on a level equal to or above educators who have a decade of teaching or more.”

—Kent Maslin, Principal, Groton Elementary

# Groton's Early Career Teachers See Big Gains in Student Achievement

*For small towns like Groton Village in upstate New York, ambitions for students are high. In 2015, the district laid out a 5-year strategic plan that sought to dramatically increase student outcomes (some indicators by over 50%) and improve teacher instruction. District leaders saw Groton's 18 "early-career" teachers — 30% of the teaching population — as having the ability to have the highest impact on student growth and made a strategic investment in their ability to build capacity.*

## Bringing Student-Centered Learning to Groton, New York

Groton Central School district serves the Groton Village community of 2,400 and an additional 2,800 residents of surrounding areas of the Finger Lakes region in upstate New York. For almost a century, the town was home to Smith Corona Typewriter Company but in recent years has served as a commuter town for nearby Ithaca and Cortland.

In 2015, the district released a new 5-year strategic plan designed to address low test scores and shift toward a more student-centered approach to instruction. A key component of this plan was creating meaningful opportunities for each student to excel in small, collaborative and diverse learning environments. For Groton students to succeed, educators needed to bring innovation to their classrooms.

## Early Career Teachers as the Key Lever

Changing practice is hard, but it can be incredibly difficult for early-career teachers. A year into the new initiative, Superintendent Margo Martin noticed newer teachers were still focusing most of their instructional time on classroom management and not the new student-centered initiative. With 30% of Groton teachers considered "early career," the goals of the strategic plan could not be met without their full participation. They needed a solution that could not only help with classroom management but also support the implementation of new instructional strategies that would help students take ownership of their learning.

*"Coming into my first year of teaching I was very tentative and unsure about what I wanted and how to get to where I wanted to be by the end of the year. With her constant support and understanding, my coach has given me confidence in my abilities as a teacher and has helped me grow closer to the type of educator I wish to be."*

Jessica Reed, Teacher  
Groton Elementary School

## 2 in 1: Classroom Management and Personalized Learning Support

Martin wanted continuous, job-embedded professional learning that reinforced the district's instructional principles. Coaching seemed like the solution, but the district did not have the manpower or resources to hire, train, and deploy an internal coaching force focused solely on the growth of new teachers.

In their search for a vendor, district leaders encountered BetterLesson Coaching and found the solution they had been seeking. The expertise of BL coaches, instructional resources, and ability to support both classroom management and student-centered learning were exactly the combination they needed. For the 2016-'17 school year, 18 early-career teachers met with BetterLesson coaches to identify instructional challenges, implement research-based strategies and reflect on their impact on student learning.

**92%**

OF TEACHERS

said BetterLesson Coaching was personalized to the specific needs of their classroom

**3.7x**

GROWTH

seen by teachers in student ability to demonstrate a key skill

**100%**

OF TEACHERS

said BetterLesson Coaching was more effective than other PD experiences

### Building Capacity From 18 to 37 Teachers

By the end of the school year, participating teachers had made significant shifts in practice. Not only had teachers developed effective systems of classroom management, but they had also made significant strides in personalizing the learning experience for students in their classrooms. Many teachers had moved toward some sort of centers-based math classroom or workshop model for literacy and these changes had led to tangible results. Benchmark assessments showed the coaching helped improve outcomes in English Language Arts and mathematics.

"I have seen an impressive amount of student growth both personally and academically. I wanted my students to realize that they have an opportunity to work hard for whatever they want, and have a positive impact on their classroom environment. I feel that my coach really understood the direction I wanted to move our classroom in and had a seriously positive contribution to its success," said one elementary school teacher

"We've seen new teachers who can get their kids to achieve on a level equal to or above people who have a decade of teaching or more," said Kent Maslin, Principal of Groton Elementary.

The impact was so profound, Martin expanded the program to 37 teachers through the 2018-'19 school year, with the hope to see more personalized learning opportunities in classrooms across the district. "This is the kind of environment Groton is trying to foster in its classrooms," she said. "Centers based learning is a way to differentiate instruction and provide information to kids at the level they're at. [BetterLesson Coaching] has helped teachers learn how to personalize learning for students."