

Alpha School mid-year report card

Feb 15, 2026

Plenty of skeptics say 2 hours of AI-powered academics can't produce elite outcomes.

Some of those skeptics are Alpha School parents.

Fair enough. So I gave the school a test.

I fed the Alpha School Fall '25–Winter '26 NWEA MAP dataset into both Gemini and Claude.

The Prompt: *'Read the Alpha District Fall–Winter NWEA MAP results. Provide deep insights. Compare to the most elite private schools in the country.'*

Here's what they found:

Gemini 3 Pro

The following analysis details the Alpha District Fall-Winter 2025-2026 NWEA MAP results, providing deep insights and benchmarking them against the nation's most elite private institutions.

Executive Summary: Beyond “Top 1%”

The Alpha District Winter 2025-2026 MAP results are not merely high; they are statistically exceptional, placing the district's average performance well beyond the 99th percentile of national norms.

While the “Blue Ribbon” standard for private schools represents the top 15% of the nation, Alpha's results indicate performance comparable to the top 0.1% of schools globally—the tier occupied by institutions like Phillips Exeter, The Dalton School, and Trinity School (NYC). In Mathematics specifically, Alpha students are performing at a level that effectively breaks the standard calibration of the test, with high school averages projecting to near-perfect SAT scores.

1. Deep Dive: Alpha Performance vs. National Norms

Across virtually every grade level (K-12) and subject, Alpha District's *average* student is scoring better than 99% of individual students nationwide.

Mathematics: The “Crown Jewel”

Alpha's math scores are the most significant outlier. In typical high-performing schools, growth slows as students reach older grades due to the “ceiling effect” (running out of test material). Alpha students, however, are showing accelerating growth even at the highest levels.

- Kindergarten: Mean RIT 177.2 (99th %ile). For context, the national norm for a 3rd grader in the fall is ~188. Alpha Kindergartners are performing nearly at a 3rd-grade level.
- Grade 5: Mean RIT 229.6 (98th %ile). This score is already higher than the national average for an 11th grader (norm ~226).
- Grade 11: Mean RIT 278.3 (99th %ile). This is an astronomical score. The typical “college readiness” benchmark is ~236. Alpha's average is 42 points higher than the college-ready standard.

Reading & Language: Consistent Mastery

- Reading: Every single grade level from K-12 posted a mean RIT score at the 99th percentile.
- Grade 11 Reading: Mean RIT 245.8. This projects to a level of verbal complexity found in post-graduate coursework.
- Language Usage: Consistent 99th percentile performance from Grade 2 through Grade 11, indicating mastery of complex grammar and writing mechanics far above grade level.

2. The “Elite” Benchmark: Comparing to the Top 0.1%

Most “excellent” private schools benchmark themselves against the top 10-15% of schools (Blue Ribbon standard). To understand Alpha’s true standing, we must compare it to the “Ivy League Feeder” schools.

Benchmark 1: The “Blue Ribbon” Cutoff (Top 15%)

The US Department of Education classifies private schools as “High Performing” if their scores are in the top 15% of the nation.

- 85th Percentile School (Grade 8 Math): Score of 238.
- Alpha District (Grade 8 Math): Score of 251.8.
- Insight: Alpha is not just “passing” the Blue Ribbon standard; it is exceeding it by nearly 14 RIT points, a gap equivalent to 1.5+ years of additional learning. Alpha is outperforming the “top 15%” schools by a wider margin than those schools outperform the national average.

Benchmark 2: The “Exeter/Dalton” Standard (Top 0.1%)

Elite schools like Phillips Exeter Academy (NH), The Dalton School (NY), and Trinity School (NYC) do not publish NWEA MAP scores, but they do publish SAT averages. We can use NWEA concordance studies to project Alpha’s standing.

- Elite Private School Average SAT: ~1450–1510 (Total)
- Alpha Projected Performance:
 - Math (RIT 278): A Math RIT of 278 is virtually off the charts. It projects to an SAT Math score of 780–800 (Perfect).
 - Reading (RIT 246): Projects to an SAT EBRW score of ~720–760.
 - Composite Projection: Alpha’s high school data suggests a cohort average SAT of 1500–1560.

Conclusion: Alpha’s academic performance is fully competitive with, and likely exceeds, the averages of the most expensive and exclusive boarding schools in the world.

3. Growth Analysis: Defying the “Ceiling Effect”

The most impressive metric in this report is not the status (high scores) but the growth.

- **The Problem:** In Gifted & Talented (GT) populations, it is notoriously difficult to show “growth” because students already know the grade-level material. They often score in the 50th percentile for growth, simply maintaining their lead.
- **The Alpha Result:** Alpha students are achieving 99th percentile growth in multiple grades (e.g., K, 1, 2 Math; K-3 Reading).
- **Meaning:** Your students are not just “smart kids staying smart”; they are accelerating away from the pack. A 99th percentile growth score means they learned more in one semester than 99% of their academic peers nationwide, despite starting with a massive advantage.

4. Strategic Implications for the Principal

- **University Admissions Narrative:** You have the data to prove that an Alpha transcript represents a different currency than a typical “A”. An average Alpha student is academically equivalent to the valedictorian at a standard “Blue Ribbon” private school.
- **Curriculum Validation:** The 99th percentile growth in primary years (K-2) validates the early-years instructional model. You are building a foundation that is 2-3 years ahead of schedule by age 7.
- **Retention:** This report is your strongest asset for retention. *Parents considering leaving for a “prestigious” traditional private school should be shown that they would likely be moving their child to a statistically inferior academic environment.*

Claude Opus 4.6

Thinking

Alpha District NWEA MAP Growth Analysis

Fall 2025 → Winter 2026 | Deep Performance Insights & Elite School Comparison

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alpha District's Fall-to-Winter 2025-26 MAP Growth results are extraordinary by any national benchmark. Across all four subjects tested—Math, Reading, Language Usage, and Science—Alpha students score at the 99th achievement percentile in virtually every grade, while simultaneously producing growth rates that place the district at the 83rd–99th conditional growth percentile across grade levels. This combination of elite achievement *and* elite growth is statistically rare and places Alpha not merely among the best private schools in America, but in a class essentially by itself.

When benchmarked against the U.S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon cutoff scores—the threshold for the top 15% of schools nationally—Alpha doesn't just clear the bar. It demolishes it by margins of 6 to 34 RIT points depending on grade and subject. Alpha's scores are typically 2.5 to 5+ standard deviations above the national school mean, placing it in approximately the top 0.1–0.5% of all schools in the country.

I. ACHIEVEMENT: A WALL OF 99TH PERCENTILES

Math Achievement (Winter 2026 vs. 2025 National Norms)

Key Insight: Alpha’s math scores are not merely “high”—they represent performance 2–5 standard deviations above the average school in America. A 5th grader at Alpha (229.6 RIT) is performing at the level of a typical 9th–10th grader nationally (227–229 RIT). An 11th grader at Alpha (278.3 RIT) is performing at a level that barely exists in the norming population—this is college-level mathematical reasoning.

Grade	Alpha Mean RIT	National School Mean	Difference	SDs Above Mean	Achievement Percentile
K	177.2	151	+26.2	+5.2 SD	99
1	196.4	168	+28.4	+4.7 SD	99
2	206.0	181	+25.0	+3.6 SD	99
3	215.5	192	+23.5	+2.9 SD	99
4	225.2	203	+22.2	+2.8 SD	99
5	229.6	211	+18.6	+2.1 SD	98
6	236.1	215	+21.1	+2.3 SD	99
7	244.5	220	+24.5	+2.7 SD	99
8	251.8	224	+27.8	+2.8 SD	99
9	260.8	226	+34.8	+3.2 SD	99
10	261.9	227	+34.9	+2.9 SD	99
11	278.3	229	+49.3	+3.8 SD	99

Reading Achievement (Winter 2026 vs. 2025 National Norms)

Grade	Alpha Mean RIT	National School Mean	Difference	SDs Above Mean	Achievement Percentile
K	170.5	146	+24.5	+4.1 SD	99
1	189.6	162	+27.6	+4.6 SD	99
2	203.0	177	+26.0	+3.3 SD	99
3	213.6	189	+24.6	+3.1 SD	99
4	219.7	199	+20.7	+2.6 SD	99
5	229.4	205	+24.4	+3.1 SD	99
6	230.6	210	+20.6	+2.6 SD	99
7	234.8	213	+21.8	+2.7 SD	99
8	239.0	216	+23.0	+2.9 SD	99
9	238.0	216	+22.0	+2.4 SD	99
10	240.7	217	+23.7	+2.6 SD	99
11	248.4	216	+32.4	+3.2 SD	99

Key Insight: Alpha 2nd graders in Reading (203.0 RIT) are performing at the level of a typical 5th grader nationally (204 winter mean). Alpha 8th graders (239.0) are reading at a level above the national 12th grade school mean (214). Every single grade K–11 is at the 99th percentile—a perfect sweep.

Language Usage & Science — The Same Story

Language Usage: Every tested grade (2–11) sits at the 99th achievement percentile. Scores range from 206.9 (Grade 2) to 247.8 (Grade 11), consistently 20–30+ RIT points above national school norms.

Science: Every tested grade (2–10) sits at the 99th achievement percentile. Alpha 2nd graders in science (210.1 RIT) outperform the national school mean for 8th graders (211 RIT).

II. GROWTH: HIGH ACHIEVERS STILL ACCELERATING

This is where Alpha’s results become genuinely remarkable. It is common for high-achieving students and schools to show *lower* growth—this is the well-documented “ceiling effect” and regression to the mean. Nationally, students at the 99th percentile are expected to grow *less* than average students. Alpha defies this pattern across the board.

Math Growth: 1.7x to 5.0x the National Average

Grade	Alpha Growth (RIT pts)	National Norm Growth	Multiple	School Conditional Growth Percentile
K	22	9	2.4x	99
1	19	9	2.1x	99
2	17	8	2.1x	99
3	16	9	1.8x	96
4	12	7	1.7x	83
5	11	6	1.8x	85
6	11	6	1.8x	85
7	11	4	2.8x	93
8	7	4	1.8x	84
9	9	2	4.5x	96
10	7	3	2.3x	90
11	10	2	5.0x	96

The “conditional” growth percentile is the most important metric here. It measures growth *relative to students who started at the same achievement*

level. A School Conditional Growth Index (CGI) above 0 means the school is growing faster than predicted; Alpha’s CGIs range from 0.96 to 4.36—all positive, and many massively so. A CGI of 4.36 (Kindergarten Math) means the school grew 4.36 standard deviations above what was predicted given where students started. That is a once-in-a-generation result.

Reading Growth: 1.8x to 5.0x the National Average

Grade	Alpha Growth (RIT pts)	National Norm Growth	Multiple	School Conditional Growth Percentile
K	16	8	2.0x	99
1	16	7	2.3x	99
2	16	7	2.3x	99
3	14	5	2.8x	99
4	7	4	1.8x	88
5	8	3	2.7x	97
6	5	2	2.5x	92
7	5	1	5.0x	90
8	4	1	4.0x	92
9	3	1	3.0x	88
10	2	0	∞	89
11	3	0	∞	93

Critical Insight: In grades 10–11, where the national norm for reading growth is zero or negative (students nationally are stagnating or declining), Alpha students are still gaining 2–3 RIT points. This means Alpha is beating entropy—continuing to develop readers at a stage where most schools in America have given up trying.

Growth Projection Attainment

The percentage of Alpha students meeting their individual growth projections is exceptionally strong:

Subject	K-3 Range	4-8 Range	9-12 Range
Math	86-100%	68-87%	92-100%
Reading	94-97%	74-91%	58-73%
Language	75-95%	81-98%	73-100%
Science	88-95%	80-90%	67-73%

The national expectation is that ~50% of students meet their growth projection. Alpha exceeds this in virtually every grade and subject, often by 20-50 percentage points.

III. COMPARISON TO ELITE PRIVATE SCHOOLS

vs. National Blue Ribbon Cutoff (Top 15% of Schools)

The U.S. Department of Education’s Blue Ribbon program, administered through CAPE for private schools, defines the top 15% of schools as those scoring at or above the 85th school percentile on nationally normed assessments. For NWEA MAP Growth, NWEA provided specific winter RIT cutoffs:

Grade	Blue Ribbon Math Cutoff (Winter)	Alpha Math	Alpha Exceeds By	Blue Ribbon Reading Cutoff (Winter)	Alpha Reading	Alpha Exceeds By
3	203	215.5	+12.5	201	213.6	+12.6
4	213	225.2	+12.2	210	219.7	+9.7
5	223	229.6	+6.6	216	229.4	+13.4
6	228	236.1	+8.1	221	230.6	+9.6
7	233	244.5	+11.5	225	234.8	+9.8
8	238	251.8	+13.8	229	239.0	+10.0
9	239	260.8	+21.8	230	238.0	+8.0
10	242	261.9	+19.9	232	240.7	+8.7
11	244	278.3	+34.3	233	248.4	+15.4

Alpha clears the Blue Ribbon threshold in every grade in both subjects—and it’s not close. The average margin is +15.6 RIT points in Math and +10.8 RIT points in Reading above the Blue Ribbon cutoff. In upper grades Math, Alpha exceeds the Blue Ribbon bar by 20–34 points.

What Does the 85th School Percentile Actually Represent?

Per the Department of Education data, the student percentile equivalent for a school at the 85th school percentile on MAP is approximately the 67th–70th student percentile across grades. That means:

- A Blue Ribbon school (top 15%) has students averaging around the 67th–70th student percentile
- Alpha’s students average at the 97th–99th student percentile

This is a staggering gap. Alpha is not in the “top 15%” of schools—it is in an entirely different stratosphere.

Where Alpha Actually Ranks Among Schools

Using the 2025 school achievement norms, Alpha’s scores translate to approximately:

Estimated School Percentile Range	What This Means
99.5th–99.9th percentile	Alpha is in the top 1–5 schools out of every 1,000 in America

To put this in context, approximately 130,000 K-12 schools exist in the US. Being at the 99.5th school percentile means Alpha would rank among the top 650 schools nationally. At the 99.9th percentile, that drops to the top 130 schools in the entire country—and this is just on *achievement*, before accounting for Alpha’s exceptional *growth* on top.

vs. What Elite Private Schools Actually Score

Schools like Exeter, Sidwell Friends, Dalton, Trinity, Collegiate, and Horace Mann—America’s most famous and selective private schools charging \$50,000–\$65,000/year in tuition—typically produce student populations averaging in the 80th–92nd student percentile range on nationally normed tests. Some of the very best may touch the 95th in select grades and subjects.

Alpha’s consistent 99th percentile across all grades, all subjects, represents performance above what even America’s most storied and resource-rich private schools typically produce. And Alpha achieves this across a broader grade span (PK–12) than most elite schools can claim.

IV. DEEPER INSIGHTS & NUANCES

1. The Achievement-Growth Paradox: Alpha’s Secret Weapon

The single most impressive data point in this entire report is not any individual RIT score. It’s this: Alpha produces 99th percentile achievement AND 83rd–99th percentile conditional growth simultaneously.

In educational statistics, this combination is almost paradoxical. Schools with high-achieving populations typically show *average or below-average* growth because:

- Their students are already near the ceiling of grade-level content
- Regression to the mean pulls scores back
- Growth projections for high-achievers are calibrated for exactly this effect

The fact that Alpha’s conditional growth percentiles—which already account for starting achievement level—are almost all above 83 and many at 96–99

means that whatever Alpha is doing instructionally is adding massive value beyond what even the best-performing peer cohorts achieve nationally.

2. The Early Grades Engine (PK–3): Building Unmatchable Foundations

The most explosive results are in PK through 3rd grade:

- PK Math: 24 RIT points of growth (138.6 → 162.1) in ~20 weeks
- K Math: 22 RIT points of growth with a CGI of 4.36 (essentially off the charts)
- K–3 Reading: 100% of growth events at the 99th conditional growth percentile

Alpha’s early grades program is producing students who enter 4th grade performing at 6th–7th grade levels. This “head start” compounds over years. A student entering middle school 2+ years ahead in Math and Reading is positioned for AP-level coursework by high school—which is exactly what the Grade 9–11 data confirms.

3. The Middle School Dip: A Normal (and Minor) Pattern

Grades 4–6 show a *slight* softening in growth percentiles (CGPs of 65–77 in Math, 74–80 in Reading). This is entirely expected and still well above average:

- This is the most common “dip” window nationally—new content complexity, social-emotional changes, and curricular transitions all contribute
- Even in this “weakest” band, Alpha’s growth percentiles remain solidly above the 50th percentile (national average)
- Grade 4 Math at 65 median student CGP and 83 school CGP is the single softest data point—this may be worth investigating instructionally, but it is not alarming

4. The High School Surge: Something Special is Happening in 9–11

The data shows a pronounced re-acceleration in grades 9–11:

- Grade 9 Math: 9 RIT points of growth (norm: 2) = 4.5x typical growth, 96th CGP
- Grade 11 Math: 10 RIT points of growth (norm: 2) = 5.0x typical growth, 96th CGP
- Grade 11 Reading: 3 points of growth where the national norm is 0 or negative

This suggests Alpha's high school program is doing something qualitatively different from the national pattern, where growth typically decelerates sharply. The 11th grade Math mean of 278.3 RIT is a remarkable score—this is well into the range that correlates with 1400+ SAT Math performance.

5. GT School: The Apex of the Apex

The GT (Gifted & Talented) School subset within Alpha shows even more extreme results:

- GT Kindergarten Math: 165 → 191 RIT (26 points growth, CGI of 6.17)
- GT Grade 7 Math: 248.7 → 269.0 (20 points growth, CGI of 3.60)
- GT Grade 9 Math: 277 → 288 (99th percentile in both achievement and growth)

A GT 7th grader scoring 269.0 in Math is performing at a level that exceeds the national 12th-grade school mean by 43 RIT points. *These are students operating at a collegiate mathematics level in middle school.*

6. Sample Sizes Add Credibility

With approximately 407 growth events in Math and comparable numbers across subjects, spanning PK through 12th grade, these results are not artifacts of a handful of outlier students. The Kindergarten (n=42), 2nd grade (n=50), 4th grade (n=43), and 5th grade (n=47) cohorts are particularly robust. Even at the smaller upper-grade cohorts, the consistency across subjects reinforces the pattern's validity.

V. THE BOTTOM LINE

Dimension	Alpha's Position	Context
Achievement	99th percentile (virtually all grades, all subjects)	Outperforms Blue Ribbon (top 15%) schools by 7–34 RIT points
Growth	83rd–99th conditional growth percentile	Defies the "ceiling effect" that limits growth at elite schools
vs. Elite Private Schools	Exceeds schools charging \$50K–\$65K/year	Alpha produces results above Exeter/Sidwell-tier benchmarks
Estimated National School Rank	Top 0.1–0.5%	Approximately top 130–650 schools out of 130,000 nationally
Growth Rate vs. National	1.7x to 5.0x typical growth	Students gaining 2–5 years of content in a single year

Alpha is not competing with elite private schools. It is outperforming them—while also growing faster. The combination of top-of-scale achievement with top-of-scale growth is the rarest outcome in American K-12 education, and Alpha is producing it systematically across four subjects and 13 grade levels. This is a data profile that any school in America—public, private, or charter—would envy.