# BEHAVIOR CHANGE STARTS WITH CLOSING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP.

*Students can't act on information they don't have.*



Before a behavior can change, people need to understand why it matters, **what needs to be done and how to put it into practice.** For more than three years, NTC has used this approach through *Land of Smiles*, an award-winning oral health education program serving students in grades K–3. Through interactive performance, age-appropriate storytelling, educational materials, take-home tools, and family engagement, the program turns an important health message into an experience students can understand, remember, and act on.

And the data shows that it works.

Across four states during the 2025–26 school year, pre- and post-program assessments consistently demonstrated meaningful gains in students' oral health knowledge. Across **43 comparable pre/post measures, every measure showed positive movement.** The greatest gains occurred where students had the largest knowledge gaps to begin with—including a **52.6 percentage-point increase among K–1 students** in identifying the correct brushing technique and a **40.6 percentage-point increase among grades 2–3 students** on the same concept.

These results demonstrate a repeatable framework for using education to create the conditions for behavior change.

## THE NTC BEHAVIOR CHANGE FRAMEWORK

Each element plays a distinct role in moving an audience from awareness to action:

**ENGAGE** → **EDUCATE** → **EQUIP** → **EXPAND** → **MEASURE**



*Land of Smiles* provides a real-world example of this framework in action. More importantly, the framework isn't limited to oral health. The same approach can be adapted to help communities understand and act on other complex priorities—**from water conservation and emergency preparedness to youth vaping prevention, online safety, senior scams, and financial literacy.**

It's an opportunity to **build education that moves people.**



# ENGAGE

Capture attention. Create an experience people remember.

Before education can change behavior, people have to pay attention.

In 2025–26, NTC brought *Land of Smiles* directly into 462 schools across four states through live, in-person performances, while another 318 schools participated through the online show. Together, the program reached 70,011 students and 778 teachers—creating thousands of opportunities to make oral health education feel less like a lesson and more like an experience.

Teacher evaluations consistently describe *Land of Smiles* as **fun, interactive, energetic, educational, and memorable:**

*"The program was very interactive and it kept my kindergarteners entertained while learning about oral hygiene."*

*"This program was highly engaging for my students! They absolutely loved Ben and Wesley, and were laughing the whole time!"*

*"Best program I remember in my 28 years of teaching. They truly engaged the children and delivered content in a fun, exciting, and still covered everything!"*

# EDUCATE

Attention opens the door. Education is what changes what's on the other side. **Close the knowledge gap.**

*Land of Smiles* is designed around a simple premise: students can't act on information they don't understand. The program uses age-appropriate storytelling, interactive learning, and curriculum to introduce practical oral health concepts—and then measures whether that knowledge sticks.

The 2025–26 pre- and post-program assessments provide a clear picture of what happened. Across **four states and two grade groups, every comparable measure showed positive movement.**

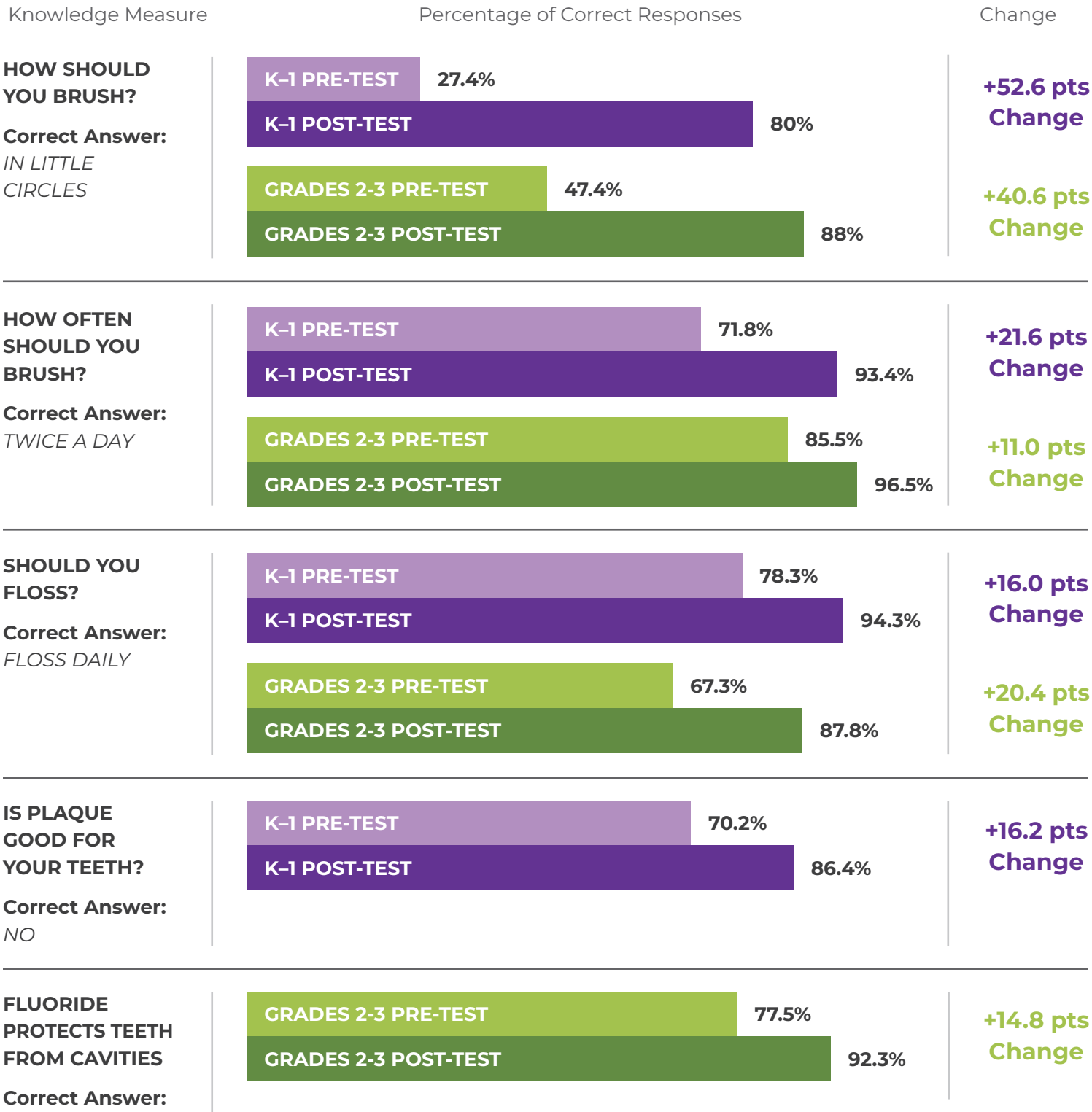
Knowledge isn't the end goal. It's the foundation for action.

## 43 OF 43

**comparable pre/post measures improved**

The biggest gaps saw the biggest gains: For K–1, correct identification of the recommended brushing technique—brushing in little circles—jumped from 27.4% to 80.0%, a 52.6-point gain. Among grades 2–3, the same concept increased from 47.4% to 88.0%, a 40.6-point gain.

Other practical concepts—including brushing twice a day, flossing, and the role of fluoride—also showed meaningful gains. This is the difference between delivering information and designing education for impact: identify the gap, make the learning memorable, and give students the knowledge they need to act.




*Results represent pooled response accuracy across available pre/post assessments. Question wording varied somewhat by state and grade group; only comparable concepts are shown.*

# EQUIP

**Give people something they can actually do.**

Knowledge creates the opportunity for change. **The right tools make action possible.**

As part of *Land of Smiles*, NTC sent **184,955 Smile Bags** home with participating students—each containing a new toothbrush, toothpaste, and dental floss.

That's more than a giveaway. It's a direct bridge between **"I learned what to do"** and **"I have what I need to do it."**

By putting the tools for healthy habits directly into students' hands—and into their homes—the program extends education beyond the classroom and creates an immediate opportunity for students and families to put new knowledge into practice.

**Educate the mind. Equip the hands. Create the opportunity to act.**




**184,955**
**Smile Bags delivered to student homes**

# EXPAND

**Turn knowledge into action.**

Learning becomes more powerful when students can see themselves in their behavior.

*Land of Smiles* connects what happens in the classroom to what happens at home—using memorable characters, practical tools, and simple, actionable health habits that students can share with their families.

Teacher feedback reinforces that connection:

*"The students enjoyed the program very much. It was a fun and interactive way to introduce dental hygiene."*

And perhaps most importantly:

*"They truly engaged the children and delivered content in a fun, exciting, and still covered everything!"*

The program is designed to move students through simple progression:

**STORY → UNDERSTANDING → TOOLS → FAMILY CONVERSATION → ACTION**

The pre/post data demonstrates that students gained knowledge. The Smile Bags put the tools for healthy habits into their homes. Together, those elements create the opportunity to turn learning into everyday behavior.

# MEASURE

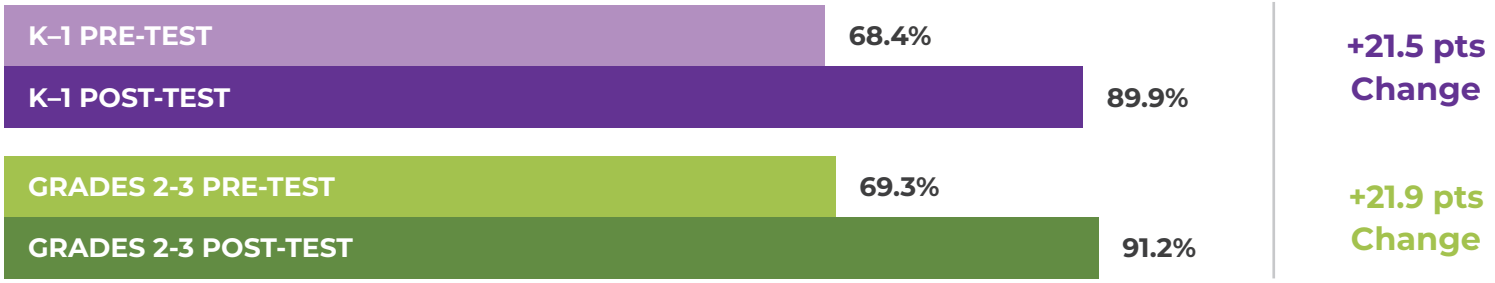
Good education should be measurable.

During the 2025–26 school year, *Land of Smiles* measured student knowledge before and after programming across four states and two age groups.

The results are clear:

☑ **4 STATES** ☑ **2 AGE GROUPS** ☑ **43 / 43 MEASURES IMPROVED**

Across all comparable pre- and post-program measures, every single measure moved in a positive direction:




The results demonstrate more than strong post-program scores. They show measurable knowledge growth across different states, age groups, and educational settings—with the largest gains occurring where students started with the greatest knowledge gaps.

That is the value of measurement: it turns a good experience into evidence.

**ENGAGE → EDUCATE → EQUIP → EXPAND → MEASURE**

A framework built not just to deliver information—but to demonstrate whether it made a difference.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