

A Case of Achievement

English Language Learners in Ysleta, Texas

Exceed Expected Literacy Growth by More Than 2.5X



2017-2018

DISTRICT KEY



41,700

STUDENTS

26%

ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS

81%

FREE OR
REDUCED LUNCH

SUMMARY

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, nine and a half percent of the elementary and secondary students in the United States are identified as English language learners (ELLs). In some states, like California, Texas, and Nevada, this number is between 16% and 21%. This presents a challenge for public education districts seeking to teach English language skills at the same time they are trying to teach grade-level content. Louisa Aguirre-Baeza, Director of the Academic Language Programs for the Ysleta Independent School District (YISD) in El Paso, Texas, is all too familiar with the unique hurdles ELL students and teachers face in the classroom.

Three years ago, the district realized it needed to shift its ELL strategy. Aguirre-Baeza describes their situation, "Our data was stating that we had a lot of long-term ELLs. So, our long-term ELLs were students who had been in our programs since elementary school but were still unable to meet exit criteria. We knew we had to focus on how to fill in the gaps of their vocabulary and linguistic development in the context of the academic content they needed to learn. We had a lot of strategies going on at the district level, but

we were doing everything in isolation and we didn't have an approach that included a full literacy program."

YISD has a population of ELLs that is equivalent to a quarter of their student body. The students range from emerging to long-term ELLs and spend various amounts of time in their ELL classes, depending on how much support they need. Research shows that no single approach or model is appropriate for all English learners. English learners, like all students, benefit from being held to high expectations on achievement standards and exposure to challenging content (Faulkner-Bond et. al., 2012). Part of the challenge educators face in serving these students is identifying their current abilities and the right amount of support needed. ELLs need to build their language skills as well as grade-level learning across the content areas—if they spend too much time in pull-out classes, they can lose out on subject area knowledge. If they spend too much time in general education classes, they miss out on the opportunity to learn English and their access to subject area knowledge is compromised.

2017-2018 SCHOOL YEAR



NUMBER OF
SCHOOLS

20



2,095
STUDENTS



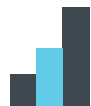
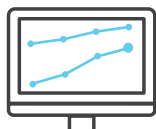
GRADES
6-12

63%

AFTER-SCHOOL
LOGIN

82L

EXPECTED LEXILE GROWTH



106L

ACTUAL LEXILE GROWTH



AVERAGE
ACTIVITIES
PER STUDENT

THE SOLUTION

Assessment, Differentiated Instruction, and Flexibility

According to Aguirre-Baeza, the district chose to pilot Achieve3000's platform because they knew that it incorporated a systematic approach for identifying and tracking changes in students' precise Lexile measures and matching every student to the appropriate content. "We knew that Achieve was used to fill in gaps and build a strong foundation for literacy."

When asked why Achieve3000's approach has been an effective tool for YISD's ELL students and teachers, Aguirre-Baeza is unequivocal in her response. She cites three primary aspects of the platform that make the difference for ELL students and teachers:

Easily Measure and Track Changes in Students' Lexile Measures



All classrooms have a range of ability levels, and this challenge tends to be exacerbated in ELL classrooms where students may have a wide range of English language proficiency and cultural familiarity, which plays a significant role in the students' new language acquisition as they grapple with idioms and references that don't always make sense. Being able to easily identify the students' level of English proficiency by assessing their Lexile measures has allowed the district to unify their instructional approach and set district-wide guidelines for the amount of support each proficiency group needs to be successful. As Aguirre-Baeza says, "The fact that we can track Lexile growth, and we can use a systemic approach that really does meet the individual needs of the students, are what's most helpful to us."

Truly Differentiated Instruction to Meet the Specific Needs of Every Student



Once educators could see specific proficiency ranges for each student, they were better able to address each student's needs in the classroom. When Aguirre-Baeza describes the need for differentiated instruction, she explains its importance for English language learners, and all students, "We're bound by law to provide an individual educational plan for each student based on their cognitive abilities or disabilities, whichever way you want to look at that. We always used to look at that through the lens of special education. But really, because of the way technology has become integrated with our lives and provides access to all kinds of learning, we just have to meet the specific, individual needs of all students in every classroom, with or without labels. Differentiated instruction is finding all of the cognitive and linguistic and kinesthetic ways to make knowledge accessible and comprehensible to children." Achieve3000's literacy solutions enable this approach with learning scaffolds, audio supports, and differentiated content available in 12 Lexile levels in English and 8 in Spanish.

Flexible Options for Use in the Classroom



"As a district administrator, I never want to be held to a program that makes me do page one, day one, page two, day two, because that's not our reality in public education", Aguirre-Baeza states, describing what kinds of instructional supports are needed to facilitate a truly differentiated approach. She emphasizes the importance of being able to adjust lesson plans, assignments, and topics as needed, according to the climate of the classroom and students' unique combinations of skills and abilities. "That is what I really appreciate about Achieve3000: there isn't any script. It's dynamic in the sense that it works directly with the student-specific needs. We have that flexibility to target what we need to target, tie it to thematic units within our curriculum, and/or pick and choose certain articles that are either high-interest or related to the content that we're teaching. To me, that's what makes it the best, because it's accessible to students at any given time with flexibility for both the teacher and the student." Professional development is a core element of their implementation, broadening the base of teachers capable of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of the Academic Language Programs.

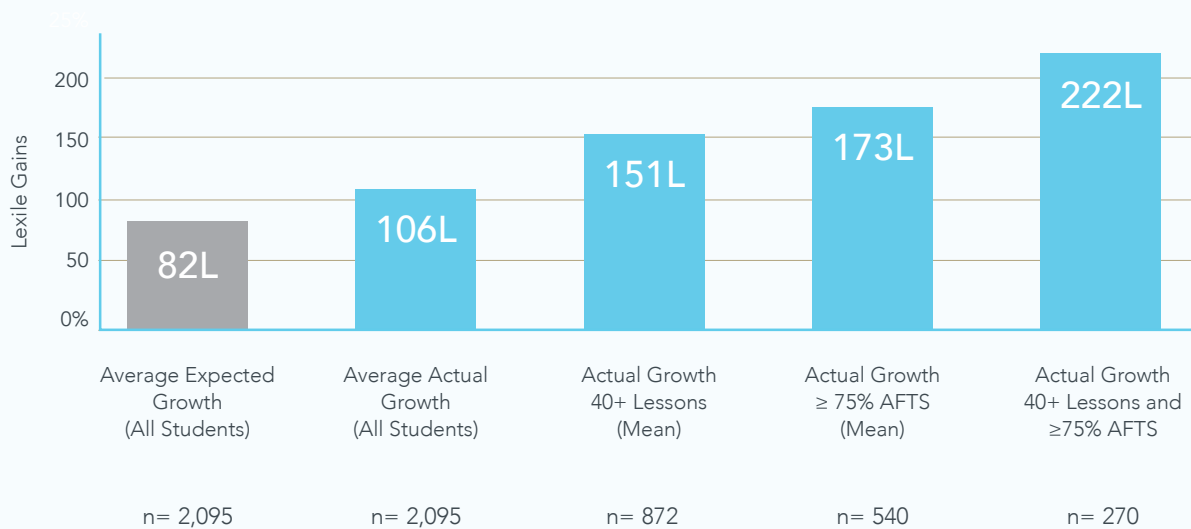
RESULTS

YISD now has a systemic approach to differentiated instruction with the flexibility teachers and students need to adjust and adapt learning content, process, and environment to effectively differentiate instruction and impact growth for ELL students. The following chart demonstrates how the quantity and quality of practice with Achieve3000's literacy solutions positively impacts students' literacy growth, as measured by the Lexile Framework for Reading.

MORE THAN
2.5X
 EXPECTED GROWTH

when students complete at least one lesson each week with an average first-try score (AFTS) of 75 percent or more on embedded assessments within each lesson.

Impact of Achieve3000's Literacy Solutions on Lexile Gains



- On average, students exceeded their expected Lexile growth by 24L.
- Students completing at least 40 lessons exceeded the expected Lexile growth by an average of 69L; this is nearly 2x their expected growth.
- Students scoring at 75% or higher on multiple-choice activities* exceeded the expected Lexile growth by an average of 91L; this is more than 2x their expected growth.
- Students completing at least 40 activities with an average first try score of 75% or higher exceeded the expected Lexile growth by 140L; this is more than 2.5X their expected growth.

REFERENCES

"The Condition of Education." National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a Part of the U.S. Department of Education. May 2018. Accessed November 19, 2018. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cnb.asp.

Faulkner-Bond, M., Waring, S., Forte, E., Crenshaw, R.L., Tindle, K., & Belknap, B. (2012). Language Instructional Education Programs (LIEPs): A Review of the Foundational Literature (pp. 107-121). US Department of Education.

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District Reduces the Number of ELL Students Far Below Grade Level by 12% with Achieve3000

Published by Achieve3000, Inc.,
1985 Cedar Bridge Avenue, Suite 3, Lakewood, NJ 08701

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