



LEXIA PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN ELL AND ELD STUDENT POPULATIONS

Reporting and Monitoring Features Provide Data for Differentiation

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- Dr. Peter Knapik
Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Staff Development
Mountain View School District

Profile:

The Mountain View School District, located 15 miles east of Los Angeles, in the heart of the San Gabriel Valley, is a K-8 school district comprised of ten elementary schools, one intermediate school, one middle school, an alternative education program for students in grades 5-8, and a Children’s Center and Head Start/ State Preschool program. The District, with an enrollment of 8,600 students, serves the educational needs of students living in the cities of El Monte and South El Monte, California.

On average, the district has 900 students per grade level. Approximately 60 percent of the students are English language learners (ELL), 100 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and the student population is approximately 96 percent Hispanic. One half of the parents in the district do not have formal education beyond high school.

Challenge:

Mountain View is a Reading First district, with a goal to focus on improving in the five domains of reading. Given the poverty level and the percentage of ELL students, the District’s challenge was evident. As Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Staff Development, Dr. Peter Knapik has placed an emphasis on technology as a key component in his strategy, however, some of the “big name” programs had proven to be too expensive to implement on a wide basis. In order to affect sufficient change in student performance using technology, Knapik sought a research-based and research-proven program that provides a cost-effective manner to reach all students to support core instruction.

Solution:

Knapik chose Lexia Learning, a program he knew by reputation was a solid program. He used monies from California Proposition 1802 to lay the foundation with an initial implementation of licenses. Then, using monies from Proposition 49 afterschool funds, he added additional licenses to support the use of Lexia in the District’s afterschool programs.

Implementation:

Mountain View began their implementation of Lexia in 2007, and made a full implementation in all elementary schools in the 2008–2009 school year. They continue to focus an ongoing dialog with teachers, principals and the English-language development (ELD) program to leverage the full value of Lexia.

“This is a tremendous product that will make a huge different in English language acquisition, as well as language arts skills over-all,” said Knapik.

With only three or four computers per classroom or lab settings, access to the program remains a challenge. Teachers take the opportunity to have students use Lexia before school, within the school day, during lunch, or afterschool. As students each spend time on the program, teachers identify and meet with students who need further support, using Lexia as part of the pull-out instruction.

The District’s goal is to have students who perform below and far below grade level to use Lexia for 20 minutes per day during the school day. Additionally, in the afterschool program, all students in grades three and four use the program at least 20 minutes per day.

Universal Access Time

“Universal Access time allows us 30–45 minutes for differentiation in the classroom by disaggregating the data and seeing which students need re-teaching or need challenge,” said Knapik. “However, Universal Access time is not implemented widespread across California or the United States, mainly because of the challenge of understanding the students’ needs and how to address those needs in the classroom through available resources—which is a differentiation issue. There is no doubt that Lexia helps us to identify gaps and effectively provide Universal Access time.”

Focusing on Data and Correlations

Knapik and his team maintain a keen focus on assessment data, and use a diagnostic approach for identifying needs and distinguishing approaches related to their instructional strategies. As a result, the team correlated Lexia to the skills on a basic phonics skills test, so that they could determine the areas in which students were struggling.

“At the kindergarten level, 80–90 percent of the students come to us as English language learners,” said Knapik. “Lexia’s connection to English language arts and English-language development are an excellent complement to our basal program.”

Results:

“The kids really enjoy Lexia,” reports Knapik. “They look forward to their time on Lexia. It is a very user-friendly, interactive, high-interest program that grabs the kids’ attention. It explains the skills in a way that students can grab it, hold on to it, and retain it.”

The District has also seen the benefits of using the program with new students.

“Lexia has been particularly helpful with newcomers in our classes, especially with those students with no experience in classes in the United States,” said Knapik. “We have implemented—on a limited basis—Lexia’s *Strategies for Older Students* for our non-English speaking parents.”

One of the most valuable aspects of the program, said Knapik, is the monitoring component, which helps his team call attention to the amount of time the Lexia is being used in the classroom.

“We know that with more time on the program, there is a definite impact on student performance and skill development,” he said. “It informs us as to what skills are under their belt and what needs attention. When we do individual conferences with parents and students; we can share that data.

Conclusion:

According to Knapik, the Lexia program is one that many similar districts would find beneficial.

“We have common challenges with some of the nearby districts in terms of API scores and AYP,” he said. “We would strongly suggest the product to them. Absolutely. The program helps to target and reinforce phonics and decoding skills. It is strongly correlated to California standards and allows students to have individual differentiation that a teacher may not be able to give; reinforcing the instruction going on in the classroom—no matter what basal program you are using. It is a very user-friendly program that provides reporting at the district, class or individual level, helping identify areas for re-teaching. It’s a great product, no doubt about it.”

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