



SUCCESS STORY

KEY FINDINGS

- English learners using *Edge* pass the state high school graduation exam
- English learners using *Edge* meet state language acquisition targets
- *Edge* connects language, literacy, and content so students can succeed

English Learners Pass the Test with *Edge*



Challenge

DeKalb County School District, in northeastern Alabama, has one of the highest concentrations of English learners (ELs) in the state. The district's ELs are assessed annually to determine if they are making Adequate Progress in Language Acquisition (APLA). DeKalb County's high school EL subgroup (Grades 8–12) had not met the state's annual targets in language acquisition in three years. In 2009, only 16% of Grade 8 ELs made APLA.

District leaders wanted DeKalb County's high school ELs to become proficient in English and also master rigorous academic achievement standards. To earn a standard high school diploma, students needed to pass all sections of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE) prior to graduation. DeKalb's ELs often did not pass the AHSGE and, instead of a diploma, received a certificate verifying their attendance and high school credits earned.

In 2009, only 24% of Grade 12 ELs graduated with a standard high school diploma.

Ms. Williams, DeKalb County Schools' Language Acquisition Coach, explained, "We wanted more ELs to earn a full high school diploma so they would be more successful in getting into college and obtaining good jobs."

Teachers wanted core instructional materials to help their high school ELs make substantive progress in language acquisition and literacy. They also wanted age-appropriate materials to engage their students in learning. To jumpstart needed changes, Ms. Williams sought a comprehensive program that was specifically designed to meet the range of needs presented by high school ELs as they strived to learn English and build their literacy skills.

Solution

Hampton-Brown Edge™ was piloted in EL language acquisition classes at Crossville High School during the 2009–2010 school year. "We selected *Edge* because the language, literacy, and content objectives were woven together, not taught in isolation," explained Ms. Williams. "It was easy for teachers to guide their ELs in making important connections that would lead to success."

"*Edge's* approach made a huge difference for my students," Ms. McAnelly, Crossville High School's Lead English Learner Teacher, noted. "It was powerful to have a comprehensive program that integrated reading and language development the way ELs actually learn and process information."

The structure and consistency of *Edge* proved important as ELs acquired skills and strategies they could transfer to other classes. Language acquisition teachers used the vocabulary and fluency routines to build their students' confidence and capabilities. "The English/Language Arts teachers noted a huge difference in ELs' reading and writing skills early on—students were more organized in their written work and better able to understand and use conventional grammar," remarked Ms. McAnelly. "Our ELs were able to apply the strategies they learned from *Edge* when reading or writing about selections from the core credit English class textbook."

"Our students have done so well with *Edge* that we have expanded its use across the district to all Grade 8–12 ELs."

—Ms. Williams,
DeKalb Language Acquisition Coach

District Statistics

District	DeKalb County Public Schools, Alabama
Schools	15 Schools (K–12)
Total Enrollment	8,960 students
English Learners	38% students
Free/Reduced Lunch	63% students
Student Diversity	50% White, non-Hispanic; 38% Hispanic; 11% Native-American; <1% African-American; <1% Other

"The **Edge** Leveled Libraries were an excellent way for ELs to practice and apply their reading and language skills. Students understood and gained more enjoyment from books when they used student journals from the **Edge** website to focus their reading," Ms. McAnelly explained. "My students were so enthusiastic about the books and stayed engaged and invested in our classroom discussions."

Results

"We saw dramatic results after just one school year with **Edge**," noted Ms. Williams. "For the first time, DeKalb's EL subgroup met the APLA targets and many more ELs passed the AHSGE."

When assessed during the 2009–2010 school year, 73% of Grade 9 ELs in the **Edge** pilot at Crossville High School achieved APLA. Grade 10 improved from 30% to 43% of ELs meeting APLA targets (Figure 1). Ms. Williams explained, "Our district feels this tremendous gain in student achievement is due to implementing **Edge**."

Edge has also enabled more ELs to pass the AHSGE and earn a standard high school diploma. After just one semester with **Edge** (the pilot began in January, 2010), 46% of Crossville's Grade 12 ELs qualified for a high school diploma. This year, 89% of EL seniors have passed the AHSGE and will graduate in June, 2011 with a standard high school diploma (Figure 2).

"Even though **Edge** is challenging, my students know it is helping them to succeed," remarked Ms. McAnelly. "Students' own motivation and expectations have been raised through their hard-earned achievement."

"Our students have done so well with **Edge** that we have expanded its use across the district to all Grade 8–12 ELs," said Ms. Williams. "Additionally, we are looking at **Inside** for the middle school and we are piloting **National Geographic Reach** in our elementary schools to get an early jump on meeting ELs' needs."

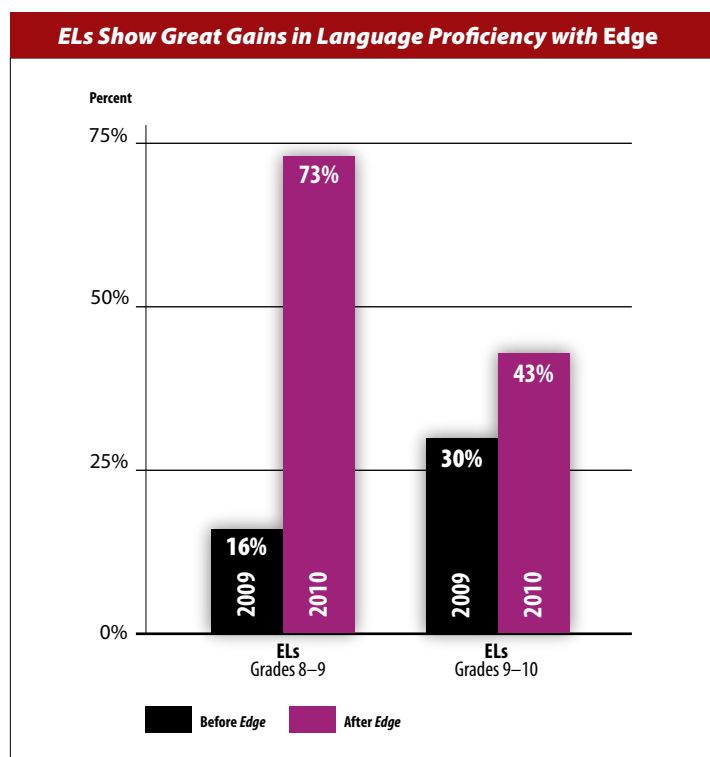


Figure 1. Percentage of ELs making Adequate Progress in Language Acquisition (APLA) over two years' time, 2009 (prior to using Edge) and 2010 (after using Edge)

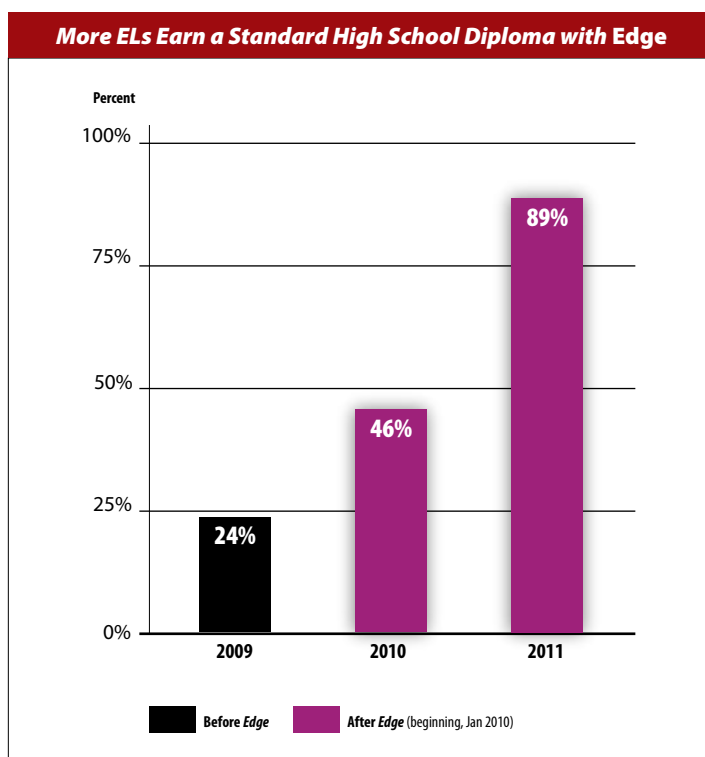


Figure 2. Percentage of Grade 12 ELs receiving a standard high school diploma, 2009 (prior to using Edge), 2010 (after one semester of using Edge) and 2011 (after full year of Edge)

For more information: National Geographic School Publishing • NGSP.com • 888-915-3276