

SUCCESS STORY

KEY FINDINGS

- *National Geographic Reach* students exceed growth targets in reading
- English language learners increase comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary using *Reach*
- *Reach* supports transition to the Common Core State Standards

English Language Learners Exceed Reading and Language Targets with *Reach*



Challenge

Leaders in The School District of Beloit (Beloit), Wisconsin wanted to strengthen their English Language Learner (ELL) instruction and sought a more unified approach that would align to the district’s English as a Second Language (ESL) delivery models to increase students’ academic success. Forward-thinking district leaders in Beloit were also looking to transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and wanted a program in place that would prepare students to acquire both English and content knowledge. The CCSS were developed to provide a clear and consistent understanding of the skills and knowledge all students will need for

success in college and the workforce. Beloit wanted a program that would prepare students for success with the new standards.

The district’s ELL Program Manager, Ms. Laursen, similarly recognized the importance of having a program that would meet the rigor of the CCSS, “The challenge was to find a program that would accelerate our ELLs acquisition of English and literacy in the content areas. We also needed a cohesive program that would provide our teachers with instructional options to implement within both the push-in and pull-out ESL models in our district.”

Solution

Beloit piloted *National Geographic Reach (Reach)* with third-grade classes during the 2010–2011 school year. The method of instruction was both a pull-out model, where students remain in class for most of the day except for the time spent with the ESL teacher, and a push-in model, where ESL teachers work with students in their mainstream classrooms.

ESL teacher, Ms. Yopez, used *Reach* with the pull-out model to frontload instruction so that students were able to fully and effectively participate in their mainstream classroom.

“*Reach* gives students the higher-level critical thinking skills they need to succeed.”

—Ms. Fuentes, ESL Teacher

“Everything that we’re teaching with *Reach*—especially the grammar and reading strategies—complement what is being taught in the mainstream classrooms. *Reach* aligns so well with the science and social studies curriculum; the mainstream teachers have said that the ESL students are returning to their classroom with more content knowledge than other students in the class,” said Ms. Yopez.

Beloit also used *Reach* during their literacy block for reading and vocabulary within a push-in ESL model. Beloit ESL Teacher, Ms. Fuentes, explained the benefits of using *Reach*, “With *Reach*, teachers have options of what to teach during their literacy block and I think that creates more student interest. The materials in *Reach* give students the higher-level critical thinking skills they need to succeed.” In addition to providing daily reading, writing, listening, and speaking instruction, *Reach* supported students with

District Statistics	
District	School District of Beloit, Wisconsin
Schools	15 schools
Total Enrollment	6,891 students
English Language Learners	16% of student population
Economically Disadvantaged	73.3%
Student Diversity	42% White, non-Hispanic; 28.9% Hispanic; 24.2% African-American; 1% Asian-American; 0.3% Native American

content-based learning through ongoing structured and scaffolded opportunities.

Reach provided ESL teachers with alignment to the CCSS and allowed Beloit to seamlessly begin transitioning to the newly-adopted standards. “**Reach** is aligned to the Common Core, so students are not missing out on any grade-level content. Students can learn the language associated with the content, but not at the expense of the content itself,” said Ms. Laursen.

Results

Beloit ESL teachers found that **Reach** worked equally well for students in both the push-in and pull-out delivery models, as shown by testing data. In fall 2010 and winter 2010, the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) assessments were used to target students’ academic performance in reading as part of the overall strategy to improve student performance. The MAP assessment uses a scale to measure academic growth from year to year called the Rasch unit (RIT) scale. **Reach** students exceeded NWEA expected growth in reading from fall 2010 to spring 2011 (Figure 1).

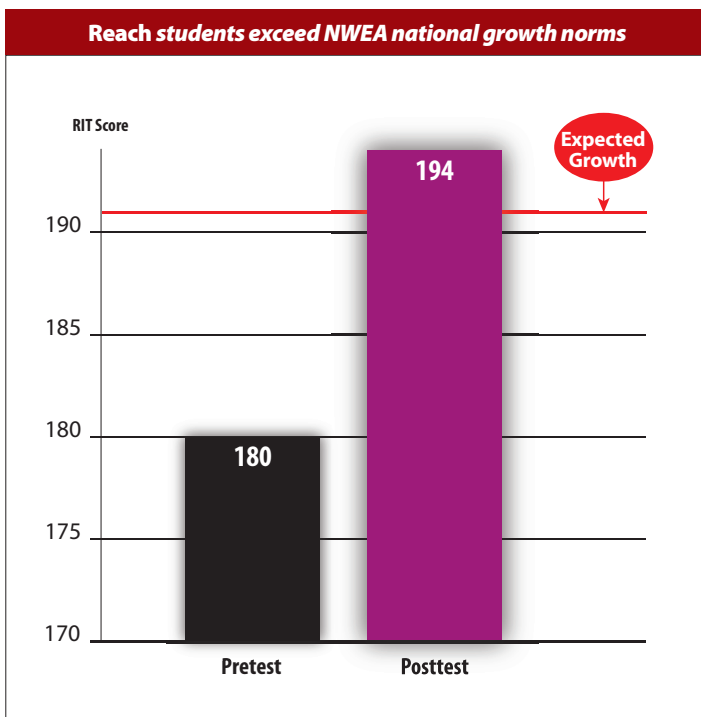


Figure 1. Third-grade ELLs’ RIT score increase in reading from fall 2010 to spring 2011 on the MAP® Reading Assessment

District leaders found **Reach** to build the foundation in language, literacy, and content that their ELLs needed to succeed. As a result, **Reach** students outperformed their peers who did not use the program. Students were tested in fall 2010 and spring 2011 using the Language and Literacy Tests, a valid and reliable measure of students’ language proficiency. **Reach** students increased their scores by an average of 89 points in Comprehension/Critical Thinking, Grammar, and Vocabulary as compared to a control group that increased by an average of 37 points (Figure 2).

Additionally, teachers found using **Reach** increased interest and motivation. “**Reach** has positively impacted student engagement, attention, and behavior. It has also improved our students’ attitudes about reading,” said Ms. Fuentes.

To continue the success they have had with **Reach**, Beloit plans to expand the use of **Reach** to meet the needs of more ELLs in the district as they roll out the CCSS.

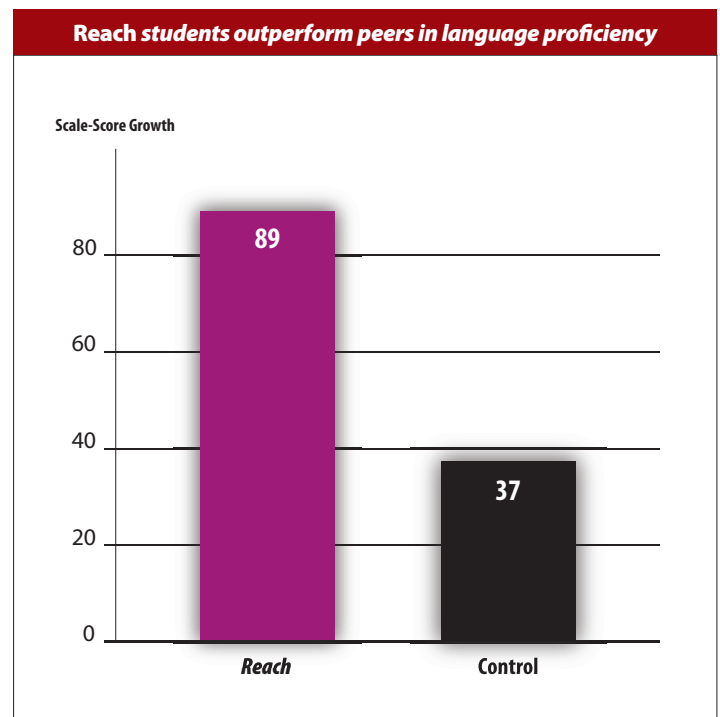


Figure 2. Third-grade ELLs’ average scale-score growth in Comprehension/Critical Thinking, Grammar, and Vocabulary from fall 2010 to winter 2011 on the Language and Literacy Tests