

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

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

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

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).

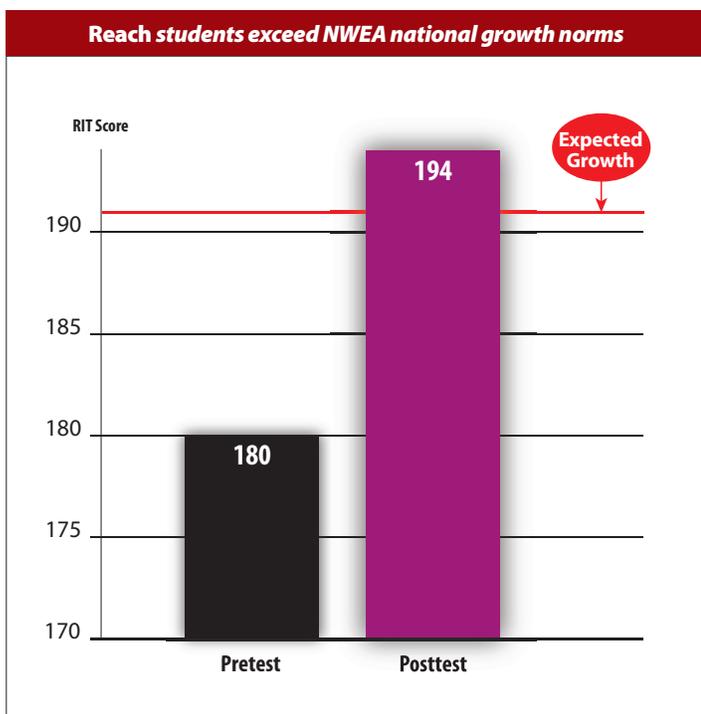


Figure 1. Third-grade ELLs’ RIT score increase in reading from fall 2010 to spring 2011 on the MAP® Reading Assessment

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.

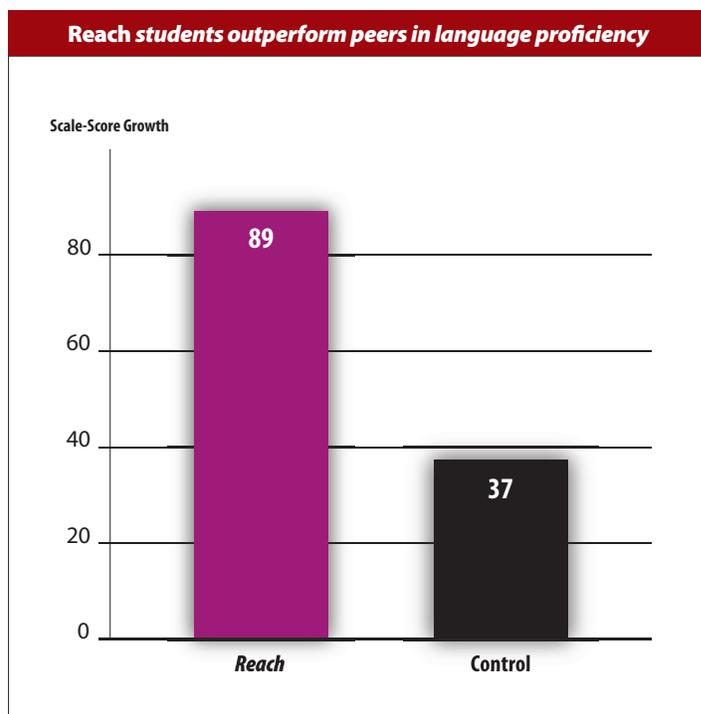


Figure 2. Third-grade ELLs’ average scale-score growth in Comprehension/Critical Thinking, Grammar, and Vocabulary from fall 2010 to winter 2011 on the Language and Literacy Tests