



SUCCESS STORY

KEY FINDINGS

- English language learners show 45% more growth in reading in one semester
- *Reach* students increase in comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary
- *Reach* aligns with district’s content-based ESOL model

National Geographic Reach Exceeds District’s Literacy Goals



Challenge

Since 2001, the number of English language learners (ELLs) in the Charleston County School District (CCSD) has quadrupled, representing as many as thirty-six different languages. Due to this influx and the diverse needs of their ELLs, the district wanted a comprehensive, content-based, literacy-rich program designed to focus on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

They sought a program to help students develop English language proficiency while increasing their reading and literacy skills in alignment with the district’s K–6 Accelerated Literacy Plan. CCSD wanted to ensure all students read proficiently before transitioning

to middle school. As a part of this plan, students were assessed using the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) and ELLs whose scores indicated weaknesses in reading were provided extra support and intervention. The district needed a program that would provide focused support in language, literacy, and content to meet the academic needs of all ELLs.

The district’s ESOL program leaders also recognized the importance of teaching English through the content areas. They wanted materials that would expose ELLs to dynamic and engaging academic language to close the achievement gap, raise test scores, and align to standards. “We wanted a program where the content-based materials were embedded,” said CCSD Lead ESOL Teacher, Ms. White.

Solution

CCSD piloted *National Geographic Reach (Reach)* with third-grade classes during the 2010–2011 school year as part of an overall strategy to improve performance and meet ELL literacy goals in line with the district’s Accelerated Literacy Plan. The method of instruction for ESOL classes was a pull-out model where students remained in regular classes for most of the day except for the time spent with an ESOL teacher.

“Reach gave students confidence that they were learning. Their vocabulary and comprehension increased as evidenced by student MAP scores.”

—Ms. White, CCSD Lead ESOL Teacher

Reach aligned with the district’s content standards to maximize student learning. ESOL teachers in CCSD understood the complex needs of ELLs and appreciated that *Reach* had content-rich instruction. “*Reach* teaches literacy through the content areas. As a result, my students are transferring what they have learned in *Reach* to other classes,” said Ms. Serpa, CCSD ESOL Teacher.

In order to build the foundation for literacy growth, CCSD teachers supported their ELLs at all language proficiency levels using the differentiated instruction in *Reach*. Students were able to access grade-level content at their individual level to help them move towards independence in language, literacy, and content.

District Statistics

District	Charleston County School District (CCSD), South Carolina
Schools	76 Schools (K–12)
Total Enrollment	44,000 students
English Language Learners	2600 students
Economically Disadvantaged	50% students
Student Diversity	51% African-American; 41% White, non-Hispanic; 5% Hispanic; 1% Asian-American; 0.3% Native American

The rigorous tools and resources in **Reach** enabled teachers to support students at all levels. “Our teachers loved it because it’s all right there. They didn’t have to pull from multiple sources to get ready for their lessons. **Reach** individualized learning for their students,” said Ms. White.

Reach also built academic language and increased language proficiency through the use of academic language frames. Ms. Serpa, explained, “The academic language frames in **Reach** made a tremendous difference. Now I hear the children using academic language with complete sentences and appropriate grammar.”

Results

Reach helped CCSD meet their literacy goals and improve achievement for their ELLs. In fall 2010 and winter 2010, the MAP reading assessment was used to target students’ performance as part of the overall strategy to improve student achievement. The MAP assessment uses a scale to measure academic growth from year to year called the Rasch uNIT (RIT) scale. **Reach** students, fall 2010 to winter 2010, had RIT score gains in reading that exceeded NWEA norms by 45% in just one semester. Additionally, **Reach** students outperformed their peers who did not use the program. After one semester, **Reach** students’ average reading RIT score increased by seven points while the control group students increased an average of five points (Figure 1). “**Reach** gave students confidence that they were learning. Their vocabulary and comprehension increased as evidenced by student MAP scores,” explained Ms. White.

Students were also tested in fall 2010 and spring 2011 using the Language and Literacy Test, a valid and reliable measure of students’ language proficiency. **Reach** students increased their scores in Comprehension/Critical Thinking, Grammar, and Vocabulary by an average of 44 points as compared to a control group that increased by an average of 12 points (Figure 2). Based on the success the district has had with **Reach**, they are expanding its implementation to other schools in the district to use it to meet the needs of their increasing ELL population.

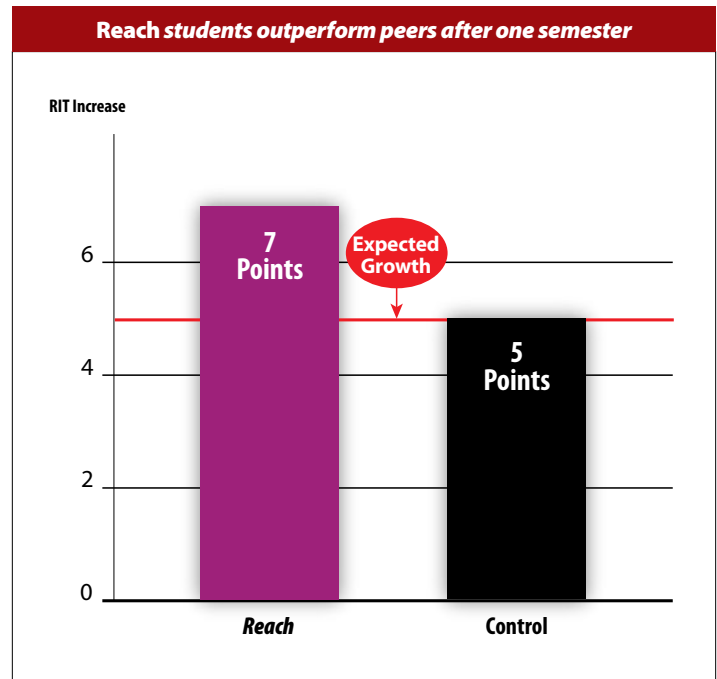


Figure 1. Third grade ELLs’ average RIT score increase in reading from fall to winter 2010 on the MAP reading assessment

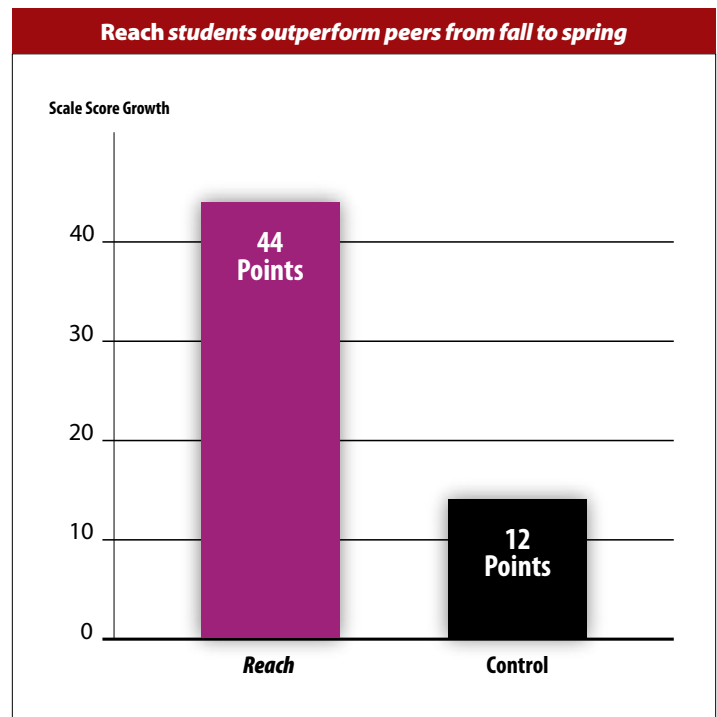


Figure 2. Third grade ELLs’ average scale-score growth in Comprehension/Critical Thinking, Grammar, and Vocabulary from fall 2010 to winter 2011 on the Language and Literacy Test

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