

**Title of Study:** *Increasing English Learner Assessment Scores with Software Intervention Programs*

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**Problem that was addressed:** *English Learners (ELs) are typically among the lowest achieving subgroups in our schools on CST and CAHSEE assessments*

**Subjects (complete, as appropriate)**

**Sex:** *mixed*

**Grade:** *9<sup>th</sup>*

**Racial/Ethnic:** *predominantly Latino*

**Academic level:** *Low achievers*

**Other:**

**Hypothesis:**

- *In order to increase assessment scores, students would have to be subjected to intervention program(s)*
- *A program that motivates students to read during their leisure time would increase student achievement*
- *A software writing program would increase student achievement*
- *Strategies such as thinking maps and Renaissance Learning's "English in a Flash" should be used to help EL students increase their vocabulary*

**Data that indicated a Need existed:**

- *1.8% of EL students in the high school scored Advanced or Proficient in 2008-09, the lowest group with the exception of Special Education compared to 20.2% of all students*
- *18.4% of Hispanics and 39.8% of Asians scored Advanced or Proficient*
- *An increase from 17.6% to 21.5% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders occurred on ELA CSTs. Several of those who improved had been enrolled in Saturday School or CAHSEE or CST pilot programs where they received two hours of English or math instruction*

**Intervention (describe what was done):**

- *Students were selected with parent consent. Students were at the Intermediate level of English language development*
- *Benchmarks were established prior to the start of the intervention program*
- *Out of a potential group of 44 students, 20 agreed to participate in an after school intervention program. These provided the "experimental" and "control" groups for the study*

- *Assessment scores were recorded including: (a) "English in a Flash," benchmark assessments to measure content academic vocabulary; (b) CELDT scores; (c) CSTs; (d) Vantage essay prompt scores*
- *The 20 Experimental group students were divided into two groups of 10 each*
- *Two teachers experienced with High Point (ESL curriculum) and the "English in a Flash," and "Vantage" software programs were chosen. These teachers were also ESL and English teachers and were reputationally effective*
- *Each group of 10 students attended a two hour block of instruction three times per week*
- *Group A was in a computer lab equipped with headphones and software for "English in a Flash" and worked on early phonemic awareness and vocabulary as well as picture recognition and beginning and intermediate levels of sentence building and structure*
- *Group B was in a second computer lab working on the "Vantage" software program focusing on grammar, sentence building, essay building, and revision. This program offers quick feedback to students while they write and gives strategies on how to improve through rubrics and benchmarks*
- *The two groups alternated with one another after 50 minutes of instruction and a 5 minute break*

### **Results (data based):**

- *A comparison of 2009 to 2010 CELDT scores showed out of 20 students that received intervention, an increase by 18 students. Of those 18, 9 increased by two CELDT levels*
- *Six had an overall score of 4 or higher, which qualified them for reclassification if CSTs and English Grade were met (**Flaminio – is "English Grade" correct?**)*
- *Of the Control group, 7 increased by one CELDT level; none scored 4.*
- *Eleven of 20 increased by at least one band on the CSTs in English Language Arts; 8 scored at Basic or higher*
- *From the Control group, only 2 increased by one CST band; none scored Basic*
- *In the Vantage prompt essay writing assessment scores and CELDT and CST assessment scores, 18 of 20 increased at least one rubric level higher; 8 of these improved by two rubric levels*
- *Of 9 students who had attendance of 85% or higher, all scored Basic on the CSTs and had a 3 or higher on the CELDT overall assessment. Of these, all had a GPA of 3.0 or higher in their home country. The remaining intervention students had an average combined GPA of 1.88.*

### **Conclusions:**

*In reviewing the data, I concluded that:*

- *There is greater likelihood for success with students who have high GPAs from originating countries*

- *English learner assessment scores are likely to increase for students placed in appropriate software intervention programs, especially when immersed in Tier 1, first good classroom teaching*
- *Students will improve state assessment results if they attend intervention classes consistently and improve their software assessment benchmarks*
- *Likewise, students who fail to participate in any intervention are unlikely to increase assessment scores*

### **What worked?**

### **What did not work?**

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Research base:**

*Wolf and Kao et al. (2008) stated that it is impossible to accurately assess the content knowledge of English language learners. They argued that CST scores showed English learners scored lowest when reviewing core content knowledge, but argued this gap, when comparing English only and ELs, may be a representation of the language barrier and not the content knowledge.*

*Improvement and hope must come in the form of good instruction, a good plan, and interventions guided not only by data but by a staff that buys into the program you are running (Nolan, 2005).*

*Not all EL students need the same type intervention (Albers, Kenyon, Boals, 2009). It is important to accurately research the needs of students so their needs can accurately be addressed. Through intervention, students may increase language acquisition and assessment scores, though educators should be skeptical of what assessments mean if not accurately measuring student efforts. It is important to use various assessments to evaluate achievement (Popham, 1999).*