

Carousel of IDEAS Success Story

Oak Grove Elementary School District



Overview

Oak Grove Elementary School District in San Jose, California is a mid-sized district where 32% of the students do not speak English as their primary language. The district established an aggressive five-year plan with short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals in various areas. One of those goals is for English language learners to advance at least one proficiency level each year, so the district purchased *Carousel of IDEAS* for Title I schools to test its effectiveness. The results have been so positive, the district decided to offer *Carousel* as an option to non-Title I schools, and now these schools also are on target to meet their achievement goals for English learners.

Challenge

In addition to English proficiency goals for English learners, one of Oak Grove Elementary School District's goals is to show Adequate Yearly Progress for these students. Administrator of English Language Programs Kim Anh Vu and district leaders believe that data can be used to inform instruction but there has to be adequate resources so that teachers can tailor their teaching to fit particular needs. Oak Grove's challenge -- common to many schools in the country -- was to find an ELD resource that allowed teachers to pick the exact instruction needed for each student. "We wanted to focus on what the students needed to be successful. By focusing on individual needs, positive assessment results will naturally follow," says Ms. Vu.

"The systematic instruction of *Carousel* is an important part of our **Title 1 schools' success.** *Carousel* just works, and our students are reaping the benefit."

Kim Anh Vu, Administrator of English Language Programs, Oak Grove Elementary School District, California.



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Solution

Fortunately, meeting individual needs and attaining successful assessment results are not mutually exclusive goals with a product like *Carousel of IDEAS*. *Carousel's* ELD instruction is systematic and focused in how it develops oral proficiency, but it does not ignore the need to adapt for individuals. *Carousel* is structured by proficiency level rather than by grade level—a method Oak Grove has found to be successful in many areas beyond English language instruction. After students are evaluated for their English proficiency, teachers can locate the specific proficiency level in *Carousel* that applies and use *Carousel's* materials to specifically teach to each student's strengths and weaknesses.

Carousel is an “explicit” instructional resource where students learn specific grammatical points including the forms and functions of English. This means that teachers actively point out the correct way to use English rather than assume students will absorb the correct grammar indirectly. *Carousel's* type of focused instruction establishes a strong foundation and then allows students to hone their English skills as they progress through the program.

Results

In 2006/07, the district started implementing *Carousel* in four Title I schools. When these schools started to outperform some of their other schools, Ms. Vu and her colleagues decided to take a closer look. They found that where *Carousel* was implemented, the English learners were outpacing other schools on the state assessments. Soon other schools in the district started using *Carousel* and found similar advances in students' English proficiency.

Educators know multiple factors may explain Oak Grove's success, but Ms. Vu believes that *Carousel* has played a major role in it. “The systematic instruction of *Carousel* is an important part of our Title I schools' success,” says Ms. Vu. “*Carousel* just works, and our students are reaping the benefits.”

