Carousel of IDEAS
Success Story

Kodiak Island Borough School District

OVERVIEW CHALLENGE

Overview

Kodiak Island Borough School District in Alaska is clearly off the beaten track, but it shares many of the challenges experienced by rural and urban schools alike. With students speaking 20 different languages, a focus on fundamentals in ELD is critical to success. Kodiak has adopted *Carousel of IDEAS* from Ballard & Tighe, Publishers because it offers a structured, systematic, and standards-based approach to language instruction that fits their instructional framework.

Challenge

- Focus on the fundamentals to improve English grammar and vocabulary
- Meet individual needs without sacrificing group progress

Porfiria Lopez-Trout is the English language acquisition coordinator for the district and implements the English Language Learner (ELL) program. Although in a rural and isolated area, Kodiak is as diverse as districts in urban areas; over 50 percent of their students are from minority groups and speak 20 different languages. Many of these families work in the fishing industry, subjecting parents to long hours, double shifts, and a host of other issues that exacerbate the language barrier at school.

Kodiak students needed a more structured approach where English Language Development is considered a *discipline* with a focus on the fundamentals of effective language acquisition, especially grammar. "Students can fool a teacher when they are being assessed for language proficiency. They can read a passage and give a false indication that their grammar is better than it really is," says Ms. Lopez-Trout. "Through our assessments, we discovered that our ELL students were appearing to read well when in fact, their vocabulary and grammar skills were lacking. We needed to do something about this."

"Investing in an ELL program involves committing time, financial resources, and training. It needs to be done right, and the program needs to fit the district. We made sure that Carousel was the right program for our needs."

Porfiria Lopez-Trout is the English language acquistion coordinator, Kodiak Island Borough School District, Alaska

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SOLUTION

Solution

Last year, the district began using *Carousel of IDEAS* from Ballard & Tighe, Publishers because it offers a structured, systematic, and standards-based approach to teaching English Language Development. It strikes a balance between early approaches to language acquisition that favored comprehensible language instruction and new approaches that favor explicit instruction and grammatical accuracy. *Carousel* also provides quick assessments that check progress on fundamental skills needed in order to communicate in grammatically correct English. Lessons are clearly mapped out, making it easier for teachers to implement them in their 45-minute instructional period.

Carousel of IDEAS systematically teaches language instruction by proficiency level, and it focuses on language functions and forms so that students learn to communicate in social settings while also becoming proficient academically. In other words, students learn their new skills in situations they experience every day, which boosts relevance. According to Ms. Lopez-Trout, "It is clear that *Carousel* was created by classroom teachers because you can just tell that it was set up the way that teachers think. Every part of the program functions in a way that teachers teach and in the context of a regular day."

RESULTS

Results

Teachers of ELL students know that self-esteem is an important issue. Like other students around the country, Kodiak ELL students do not want to feel that the time they spend outside of their regular classroom may hinder their progress. "We had one student beaming with pride one day after she found herself ahead of her peers," says Ms. Lopez-Trout. "She had just finished learning about Venn diagrams with *Carousel,* and when she returned to her regular class, they were starting to cover that same concept. I can tell you that she was one proud young lady when she could answer questions and be ahead of her classmates."

While focusing on individual success and self-esteem are important, the district is focused on the bottom line, too. While their sense is that the program is successful based on mid-course assessments, Kodiak will formally evaluate its success next year using student results on Ballard & Tighe's IPT® Testing System. Benchmark testing will take place at the beginning of the year or at the date of enrollment for any new students. District leaders hope to see positive growth on this test within each year and from year to year. They also are monitoring the success of minority groups in other standardized assessments to determine if they are staying on track in other disciplines.