How *Champion of IDEAS* Accelerates English Learner Language Development

Following Up with Rome High School

Rome High School in Rome, Georgia serves 155 English learners (ELs) from predominantly Hispanic backgrounds. The school uses primarily sheltered classroom instruction with ELs, but also offers push-in models for science and math, alongside additional one-on-one support with their before and after school tutoring.

Rome participated in a pilot study using Ballard & Tighe's English Language Development Program for grades 6–12, *Champion of IDEAS*, during the 2018–2019 academic year. They began using the program with hopes of strengthening the structure of their English curriculum for developing ELs while working to accelerate student progress in language proficiency. The results from this study indicated gains in English proficiency and helped Rome successfully establish a new framework for implementing rigorous content-based and standards-based lessons.

Following the pilot, Rome High School continued to use *Champion of IDEAS*, even through a very difficult year of pandemic–related school closures, online learning, and remote instruction. In 2020, Rome High School used the online version of *Champion* for the first time and school administrators and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers were surprised to see language proficiency growth after such a chaotic year. "*Champion* online was very helpful," Rome ESOL teacher Eliana Campbell said. "Through school closures, online learning, and quarantines, the online version really allowed us to continue our curriculum remotely, and helped keep us on track — that was awesome."

> " *It's a program that's really easy to use. The teacher's edition in* Champion *is extremely helpful for new ESOL teachers because the lesson is laid out for you.*

~ Eliana Campbell,
ESOL teacher

Online and In-Person: Then and Now

Since Rome High School has had the opportunity to utilize both the online and physical versions of *Champion of IDEAS* since 2018, they now have a better understanding of its overarching success. "After implementing this curriculum for the last couple years, we started to see some real improvement in scores and fluency this year," Rome High School Assistant Principal Joey Connell said. "Anytime you implement a new curriculum or process, you may not see results immediately. We saw that to be especially true with a lot more notable progress this year."

Connell didn't expect to see fluency growth following the pandemic, but surprisingly, they've seen significant gains across the board. He noted that moving the needle on student improvement with juniors and seniors can be particularly hard since they've been served for so many years, yet he noticed significant gains with students in Campbell's classes. This is the sign of an excellent teacher, but also points to how the curriculum itself is working, Connell explained.

> *Champion of IDEAS does a great job of providing structure while also covering important academic content areas that integrate skills across listening, writing, and speaking.*
>
> ~ Joey Connell,
> Assistant Principal

Connell also mentioned that having both options — the physical and online versions — of *Champion* has been very helpful, especially in a year like 2020 where they were transitioning back and forth between in-person and remote instruction. "I've seen a real benefit to the physical, tangible books that the kids can manipulate and use hands-on, but the balance of having both the physical and online versions has been really good this last year," he said.

Rome High School also uses Ballard & Tighe's *Frames for Fluency*, another English language development tool that can be used alongside *Champion*. The sentence frames provide ELs with targeted scaffolds to achieve grammatical accuracy and oral fluency, reduce teacher prep time, and are a perfect supplement to the *Champion* curriculum. Connell and Campbell highlight their use specifically as a meaningful, yet fun warm-up activity that their Level 1 ELs really enjoy.
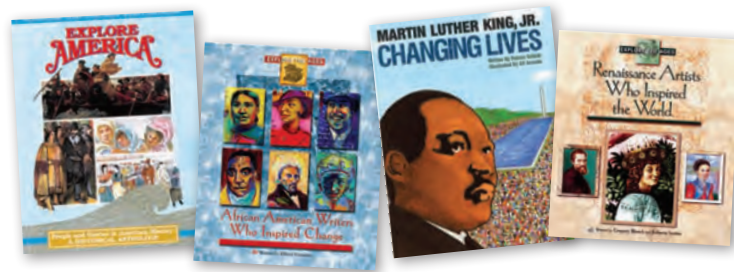
Empowering Real Life Confidence

Online fatigue following the pandemic has become noteworthy to teachers and students alike, particularly for ELs who may not have adults at home to practice language development skills with on a consistent basis. Many teachers, like Campbell, will continue to integrate tools they found useful in remote instruction to empower students' individual expression, regardless of the learning model. The overarching goal of **all** learning models is to inspire language confidence.

Campbell used FlipGrid videos to get her students to practice speaking during online learning, and noticed that it helped students stay on track with regards to the fluency portion of their language development while bolstering confidence in their unique cultural backgrounds.

Speaking is typically the biggest challenge for English language development in high school, said Campbell, because students are self-conscious, nervous or worried about the reactions of their peers. But using *Champion of IDEAS* stories that highlight diverse historical figures allows developing ELs to relate in a culturally-specific way that builds confidence.

Champion stories, like the one depicting Cesar Chavez, allows students to see the impact that people of diverse cultural backgrounds have on history and the world. "I tell my students that English is a weapon," Campbell said. "When you learn this language and become fluent, it can become your tool to change the world, or your family's world. It gives me chills to think about," she said.

In Campbell's class, students will read the *Champion of IDEAS* stories out loud together or individually at her desk one-on-one. "The kids love it," she exclaimed. "They're all asking me, 'Can I read today?' and I'm talking about high school students who are often afraid of sounding silly." Campbell uses the content to teach the importance of unique identities and diverse cultures. "I have an accent," Campbell reassures them. "Your accent is a part of your identity that lets people know you have a story before you came to America."

Ballard & Tighe

Progress Monitoring Means Growth

Another important component inside the *Champion* curriculum is the progress monitoring that can be garnered through the assessments at the end of each content chapter. These tests provide high-quality, relevant data to inform pace and instruction for teachers while allowing administrators to gauge overall growth. Rome High School ESOL teachers use the assessments to monitor student progress and as a benchmark for the three EL placement levels offered. "The tests allow me to see if the students are truly understanding a chapter or content section so I can adjust accordingly," Campbell said. "I can revisit a chapter the entire class struggled with, or help a student one-on-one." With different EL levels inside one classroom, Campbell often has to create differentiated instruction. The progress monitoring assessments allow her to do that in a systematic and streamlined manner.

A particular success story always sticks out for Campbell when thinking about remarkable gains in language development. "I had a student on an IEP with vision impairment alongside other learning disabilities and I was always impressed with how he would hang onto every word I presented," she recalls. "He made a huge jump in his composite score. It was a big deal because I hadn't seen that kind of jump in growth; typically it's a gradual progress. His attention and interest in the curriculum and content made a huge difference in his scores," she said.

This story, combined with the feedback from EL students in her classroom and the increased language development scores overall are what continues to give Connell, Campbell, and the other ESOL teachers and administrators confidence in the *Champion* curriculum.

> " *I love Champion. They have really thought of everything.* "
>
> ~ Eliana Campbell,
> ESOL teacher

Here's to the Future

Rome High School teachers and administrators agree that *Champion of IDEAS* English Language Development Program is engaging for students, easy to use for teachers, promotes accelerated language acquisition, and has everything needed for a successful classroom (or virtual) curriculum.
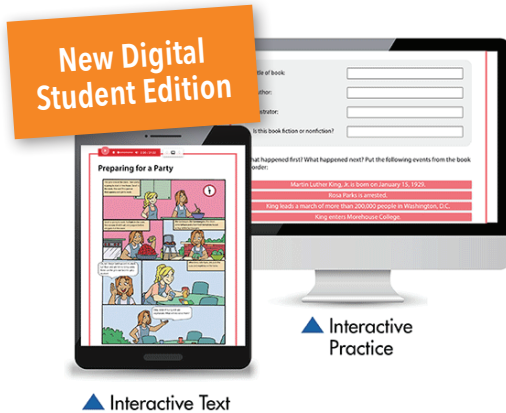
"We saw an improvement in test scores the first year we used *Champion*, and we continue to see improvement now," Campbell stated. "I would absolutely recommend *Champion* to any school or district," she continued. "It's a program that's really easy to use. The teacher's edition in *Champion* is extremely helpful for new ESOL teachers because the lesson is laid out for you. I mean, it doesn't get much easier than that."

Rome High School will continue to use *Champion of IDEAS* to promote English language development and accelerate language acquisition for their ELs and are confident in the continual growth they've seen since implementing it in 2018.

Ballard & Tighe

A Look Inside *Champion of IDEAS*

Rigorous, research-based language development program for middle and high school English learners at all levels of language proficiency.

New Digital Student Edition

▲ Interactive Text

▲ Interactive Practice

- Interactive tools
- Scaffolds to support comprehension
- Annotating tools
- Automated scoring and self-checks
- Progress monitoring

Systematic Scope and Sequence

Language forms (grammar) and functions (tasks) are introduced and reinforced through the units. Language objectives are aligned with state English language proficiency standards and support the Common Core State Standards.

Champion explicitly teaches and builds grammatical fluency and accuracy throughout the program.

Systematic Instruction

The program integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing with major content areas to prepare students for success in mainstream academic classes taught in English.

Vocabulary and Academic Language

Champion provides explicit vocabulary and academic language instruction with the goal of creating proficient readers who can access mainstream content-area text.

Rigorous Content

The *Champion* Reader covers a broad range of interesting topics including history, literature, communication, mathematics, and science and technology, as well as many different reading and writing genres.

At the end of each reading, students answer comprehension questions that assess understanding of the content and promote higher order thinking skills.

Placement & Assessment

Summative and formative assessments track student progress and inform instruction.

LET'S CHAT!

SCHEDULE A DEMO

Schedule a demo to see how *Champion of IDEAS* can work for you!

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www.ChampionOfIDEAS.com