

IPT Success Story

Port Arthur Independent School District



OVERVIEW
CHALLENGE



Overview

Port Arthur Independent School District (ISD) in Texas uses the IPT Assessment System from Ballard & Tighe, Publishers to accurately assess their students' English proficiency. Limited English Proficient (LEP) students take the IPT in order for the Language Assessment Team to determine the level of English language support each student needs. Students who show a sufficient grasp of English may be ready for an English-only curriculum with no additional support. However, the district provides varying degrees of English support for students who do not show a sufficient grasp of English.

Challenge

Port Arthur ISD has a clearly defined curriculum with specific objectives spelled out across grades and subjects including goals for TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) improvement each year. Teachers follow a scope and sequence mapped out in six-week periods. With such a clear-cut plan for the district's 11,000 students, it is vital that LEP students receive the support they need so they too can succeed and reach the district's goal for their success on the TAKS.

It can be a challenge to know if a student is really as fluent in writing and reading English as they seem to be conversationally. "If you walk down the hall, our LEP students seem just as comfortable with the language as everyone else," said Dr. Bertha Garza, the director for multilingual and migrant programs for Port Arthur ISD. "They can even fool you in some of the school work like mathematics, but sometimes that assumption is inaccurate."

The only way to really understand a student's grasp of academic English is with a **formal assessment program** that is well-regarded in its ability to **measure writing** and **reading proficiency**.

– Dr. Bertha Garza



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SOLUTION RESULTS

Solution

Dr. Garza had years of classroom experience when she started running the district's multilingual programs. Her department had to accurately assess academic English proficiency for each child to make sure they were not overwhelmed by the district's curriculum. She also knew that an English Language Arts test did not measure proficiency in the way that the IPT did.

"The IPT is an excellent measure of actual language proficiency including fluency. We use the IPT to assess every LEP student initially and at least every other year to assess student progress," said Dr. Garza. The district wants to have multiple measures so that their placement is as accurate as possible. "We rely on the IPT so that our students are placed appropriately."

Results

Dr. Garza feels that they are on the right track. "Our assessments are accurate and with our Two-way Immersion and Bilingual Instructional programs, our LEP students are making great strides," she says. In three of the district's elementary schools, over 75 percent of the third grade LEP students passed the reading portion of the TAKS on the first try. "We would like to think that accurately placing our LEP students helps us make better choices about what each student needs in their instructional plan," says Dr. Garza. "The IPT is an important element in our coordinated instructional approach."