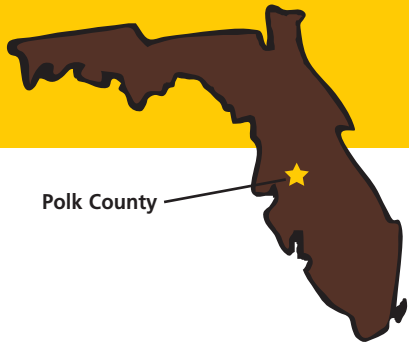


IPT Success Story

Polk County School District



OVERVIEW
CHALLENGE

Big District Needs: Quick, Accurate English Language Assessment

Accurately assessing and placing ESOL students (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is challenging for most districts but in a large district like Polk County School District in Florida, accuracy and speed are critical. Polk County SD has nearly 95,000 students and 12,000 of these students are in the ESOL program. Polk County relies on Ballard & Tighe's IPT® Testing System for identifying and placing English learners because it is quick and accurate, and teachers have confidence that it does the job.

Challenge

Five years ago, Polk County School District launched an educational plan that emphasized individual success across the population groups, meaning that English learners needed to be more successful on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). At the same time, the state mandated that the Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA) be given as the year-end assessment for ESOL students. The CELLA provides comprehensive information about student language proficiency but because it is a secure exam, the results are scored off-site and cannot be used for placement or to drive individualized instruction.

The district still needed an English language assessment that would yield useful information so it could accurately place its ESOL students. Furthermore, because it has a rapidly growing student population, its assessment tools have to be easy to administer and provide immediate results—not at the end of the school year. “With 12,000 students to evaluate, we have to be quick, efficient, and accurate in placement. There is no room for error,” says Ms. Mary Kolling, a teacher resource specialist with the district.

“The **IPT** is just one of those **invaluable resources** that you never want to give up. We have found that it is a **reliable test** that helps us make informed decisions about our **ESOL students.**”

– Mary Kolling



IPT Success Story



SOLUTION

SUMMARY

Solution

Similar to how most districts across the country operate, Polk County School District relies on a Home Language Survey to identify new students who may need ESOL services. After the language survey however, the district still needs more information about each student's ability to comprehend and communicate in English. Having used the IPT Oral test with great success, the district decided to add the IPT Reading and Writing tests to their tool chest. The new tests, they reasoned, would produce critical information about each student who demonstrated oral proficiency but who may harbor varying degrees of English reading and writing proficiency.

"We had used the IPT Oral assessments successfully for many years, so it was an easy decision to begin using the IPT Reading and Writing when it became apparent we needed more information to make better decisions about placement and instruction," said Gary Pratt, a teacher resource specialist for the district.

The IPT is structured by language ability so students only progress through the test as far as their skills allow, giving teachers enough information so that they can individualize their instructional plan. "We like the fact that the IPT does not waste time in determining a student's English proficiency," adds Mr. Pratt. "We also like that we get additional information about where their strengths and weaknesses are so we can let their teacher know which areas to emphasize."

Summary

With the IPT family of tests, Polk County School District has streamlined its placement process to a mere two weeks. In today's time-crunched teaching year, each day is critical. "Now that our ESOL students' scores are being monitored so closely by the state, we cannot waste time, and we cannot make mistakes. Even students who enter mid-course can be evaluated and immediately placed," says Ms. Kolling. The extra teaching time gets students on track with their peers more quickly and in the end, helps boost their performance on the FCAT. "The IPT is just one of those invaluable resources that you never want to give up," adds Ms. Kolling. "We have found that it is a reliable test that helps us make informed decisions about our ESOL students."