

Meeting the Needs of Young English Learners Through Blended Learning

Using technology effectively to enhance instruction

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Nationally, the number of English learners continues to grow, presenting district administrators with unique challenges. Blended learning that incorporates computer-adaptive assessments and instruction can be a vital resource to meet the needs of these students and to help them become proficient in English and succeed academically.

This web seminar focused on key strategies for implementing blended learning initiatives on a district level. Presenters included a leader of the Department of Multicultural Education in the School District of Palm Beach County in Florida, which is one of the largest districts in the nation, serving more than 194,300 students who speak 154 languages and dialects.

Lisa Capra: Our No. 1 goal is that students will become fully bilingual and biliterate, developing high levels of academic proficiency in their first and second language, and ensuring positive cross-cultural attitudes.

Our guidelines state that any recently arrived English learners to this country who are Spanish speakers can be placed in the program at any grade, regardless of literacy level. The two-way immersion program is a 50-50 model, which means that core academic instruction time is divided equally between languages. Teaching reading and writing in both languages is non-negotiable. Spanish-speaking English learners and native English-speaking students are integrated for instruction so that both groups serve in the role of language model and language learner at different times of the day.

We expect to see a clear and distinct separation between languages. The language of instruction should be obvious to a visitor, beginning with the teacher staying faithful to the language of the instructional material. This environment promotes students to stay in the language of instruction and adds consistency for language acquisition. We are fortunate to have a dual-language coach position in every one of our elementary schools. Their job is to oversee the imple-

mentation of the program and to work with dual-language teachers and students. They are my direct line to each school and its program.

We are always shining a light on the idea that teachers must work together in a dual-language program. Teachers need common planning time, because they share students, so they must build and maintain open lines of communication. They must work with their administration to assure equity in schedules, and they must attend parent conferences with their teacher partners to give parents a complete academic picture.

We train coaches and teachers on second-language acquisition theories and provide the latest research on best practices within dual-language classrooms. And since everyone at some point in the day is learning a second language, we always emphasize oral language to develop strong language abilities.

As we looked at our dual-language programs and we analyzed their needs, we decided on Istation Español because of the existing structures we had in place, and the fact that Istation was an adaptive technology that met the needs of Spanish speakers as well as English speakers. Also, it provides a progress monitoring piece that allows us to monitor its effectiveness across our programs.



LISA CAPRA
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VIVIANA HALL
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We must value language as an asset. We don't want to continue to promote a subtractive schooling environment. We cannot completely address the needs of our English language learners if we don't consider their culture and language and use that knowledge as a teaching tool. One way to do that is for teachers to understand that the students bring knowledge and experience with them when they come. They are not blank slates where teachers have to start all over. By tapping into what they bring with them already, students have an easier time transferring that knowledge to English.

Istation can inform teachers of what Spanish-speaking children can do in their first language, and provides them with a more complete picture of their students' abilities. Differentiation is made easy through Istation. The program is user-friendly and informs teachers about their students' progress. It makes learning meaningful and fun. Besides the program itself, the support from the Istation family is unprecedented. I have never worked with a more customer-friendly company in the 21 years of my education career.

Viviana Hall: Istation is proud to partner with dedicated educators and leaders such as Lisa and Palm Beach County in Florida.

Istation provides blended learning and intervention for reading, math and Spanish literacy instruction. Districts across the country use Istation, including more than half of the nation's largest school districts. Additionally, we support five statewide initiatives with Kansas, Texas, New Mexico, Idaho and Arkansas. Overall, there are over 4 million students who are learning with Istation blended learning solutions.

Istation's Super Seven Essentials for intervention and instruction include:

1. formative assessments
2. adaptive curriculum
3. personalized data profiles
4. teacher resources
5. school-to-home connection
6. professional development
7. proven results

Istation is an all-inclusive, one-stop solution. Plus, Istation is correlated to WIDA protocol, which supports English as second language learners, and it also supports WIDA Spanish for literacy instruction.

A powerful data-driven teaching tool for Spanish reading intervention, Istation Español is perfect for bilingual and dual-language implementation models. Our Spanish instruction for pre-K through fifth grade immerses students in authentic Spanish literature and interactive lessons that address the foundational skills required to become a successful reader.

School districts across the country use Istation Reading and Istation Español together, including one major urban public school district with a student population that includes 39 percent who are English learners. Sixty-six campuses throughout the district used Istation Reading to assess and instruct more than 25,000 K5 students. By the end of the school year, the percentage of students assessed as reading at grade level grew 46 percent.

Among students using Istation Español, the percentage of English language learners assessed as reading Spanish at grade level grew 29 percent over the course of the school year.

To learn more about how Istation supports the needs of English learners, visit www.istation.com.

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To watch this web seminar in its entirety, please visit: www.districtadministration.com/ws103017