i-Ready®

Oak Grove: Report from Year 4

How one Silicon Valley district paced their edtech rollout to empower staff and accelerate growth

> **"** Our challenge is helping one teacher differentiate instruction for 25–35 students. **"**
>
> **—Amy Boles**

Amy Boles, Director of Educational Services for Oak Grove School District (OGSD), facilitates curricular decisions for a population in which more than 70 percent of students are Latino, Asian, or Pacific Islander. Nearly one quarter are English Learners (ELs).

"Our students represent a great diversity of backgrounds and needs," she says. "We're always working to understand what they've come in with and where they can go next."

In recent years, soaring real estate values have driven families out of OGSD neighborhoods, culminating in the distressing closure of two schools in 2018. Amid economic disparities, budget pressures, and decreasing enrollments, the district is striving to invest wisely and fulfill its mission of equipping all children to achieve their maximum potential.

This is the story, told by Boles and her colleagues, of their adoption and ongoing implementation of *i-Ready*.

A Superintendent's Shopping List

"All aspects of our education setting changed at once," says Oak Grove Superintendent José L. Manzo.

It was 2012 when he took the top job, and California schools were facing new learning standards, a new state assessment system, revised state funding formulas, and significant shifts in the instructional philosophies that had prevailed for decades. In the past, Manzo says, such changes came with state-sponsored onboarding supports, like approved curricular materials and teacher trainings. This time they didn't, and OGSD educators were suffering as a result.

"I visited the sites, and teachers told me over and over that they had lost a sense of confidence in their instruction," remembers Manzo. "We were looking for a way to build that back."

Oak Grove School District
San Jose, CA

Grades:	**TK–8**
Enrollment:	**10,000**
English Learners:	**23%**
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged:	**40%**

What's Inside

- Administering and Analyzing the First Diagnostic
- Teachers Talk about *i-Ready*
- Dos and Don'ts for Kindergarten
- Affirmed! *i-Ready* Aligns with Standards
- Four Key Data Initiatives for Year 3
- *i-Ready* and EL Reclassification
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He looked to give teachers increased exposure to the new standards and easy, effective tools that could help evaluate whether the kids were absorbing the material and present that information to parents.

The first platform the district piloted did not survive full-scale implementation. So in 2014, OGSD's Director of Innovation convened a working group to review candidates for a new adaptive assessment and instruction platform. Manzo told them, "Whatever tool we choose, it must give teachers continuous and ongoing feedback regarding the impact of their instruction."

The team chose *i-Ready*, citing its ability to pinpoint students' placement across domains and then build out an appropriate learning progression, its coverage of Grades K–8, and its overall ease of use. It would, they believed, give teachers the data and flexibility to meet Manzo's chief requirement. In spring 2015, he signed off on adoption for the fall.

Taking the First Diagnostic

"The first year," says Boles, "we focused primarily on a high-quality, coordinated implementation of *i-Ready Diagnostic*."
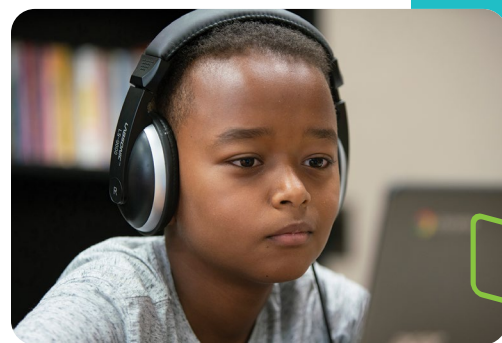
This entailed ensuring the logistics were well planned, plus socializing *i-Ready*'s overall purpose and more importantly, its validity. One Oak Grove teacher likely speaks for many when she says, "Over the course of my 15 years, we've been sold a few different programs. Not all of them worked."

Teachers would need to see it work inside their own classrooms, with their own students, to believe in it.

First, leaders chose three Diagnostic Windows to dovetail with the district calendar. Window 1 was scheduled so results could be used for initial planning and presented to parents during Goal-Setting Conferences in September, and Windows 2 and 3 were selected to coincide with the synthesis of student data in January and at the end of May.

Next, they . . .

Depending on their grade level, students take about 25–60 minutes to complete *i-Ready Diagnostic*.

1. **Trained teachers and students on the nature of an adaptive diagnostic.** Students needed to know what to expect, not to rush, and not to get discouraged when questions seemed too easy or too challenging.

2. **Optimized devices for testing.** The district's EdTech team, a three-member crew of former classroom teachers, made sure the district's Chromebooks™ met *i-Ready*'s technical requirements and oversaw integration with Clever, the district's single sign-on platform. In Year 1, everyone was sharing devices, so Chromebook carts made the rounds according to a schedule set by teachers.

3. **Channeled extra support to kindergarten** because Oak Grove's youngest learners needed the most support to reach digital readiness. To log in kindergarteners, some schools used a badge held up to a camera, while others assigned sixth grade "buddies" to help. Principals distributed

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support resources to kindergarten teachers, though Boles allows that if she could go back, she'd start thinking about onboarding kindergarten even earlier. "I'd make it a bigger priority," she says.

4. **Watched for Rush flags and reset tests when needed.** When students went too fast to allow for good effort, *i-Ready* flagged their test so teachers could reset it. Other occasions for retesting included observation of disengagement, taking too long to finish, and scores that dramatically contradicted what the teacher knew of a student's proficiency.

First Look at New Data and Reports

With the completion of the first *i-Ready Diagnostic*, all OGSD students received . . .

- **An overall scale score**—a number between 100–800 to indicate overall proficiency in the skills and standards tied to their particular grade

- **A scale score for each of four Math domains and six Reading domains**, to give more granular insight into skill mastery and deficits

- **An indication of whether they were performing on, below, or above grade level**, and for those on grade level, a placement of Early, Mid, or Late in the year

- **A growth measure**—a benchmark for the increase in scale score points that, if achieved or exceeded by the end of the year, would indicate the student had made expected growth

- **A queue of online lessons and quizzes selected just for them**, based on their individual Diagnostic results and optimized to support them in achieving growth

These results were available immediately and viewable in multiple reports that pulled data at the student, class, building, and district level. In one report, teachers were able to see, for example, which kids were reading at a level one grade below and which at one grade above. Or they could drill down to see which subset of students were below level in, say, the Math domain Number and Operations.

Boles was Principal at Parkview Elementary when *i-Ready* was first implemented, and she recalls that one of the earliest benefits was that kids could access it—and keep progressing on their learning path—outside of class.

"Teachers were happy to be able to offer that, and parents really liked seeing what their kids were working on at home," she says.

Belief Bubbles Up from the Classrooms

Oak Grove leaders purposely gave teachers space to explore and integrate *i-Ready* at their own pace. "One of the exciting benefits that came through was that teachers began training themselves and one another," says Boles. "They were taking ownership."

Groups of "early adopters" surfaced, some of whom noticed *i-Ready*'s flexibility with regard to assigning supplemental lessons and prioritizing domains. Many noticed that *i-Ready*'s learning path was addressing skill deficits they'd observed during teacher-led instruction. Some grade levels tried using *i-Ready*'s suggested groupings to form small groups and assign the targeted instruction and Center Activities available in the online Teacher Toolbox.


Katie Kusa, First Grade Teacher

Early fan and first grade teacher Katie Kusa ultimately decided that *i-Ready* had an important role to play in her teaching: "The program we were using before didn't have as much flexibility. The more we explored *i-Ready*, the more we realized, '*This* looks like one we can really use and adapt to make our teaching better.'"

Kusa continues, "Before, it was just me observing and checking in with students. And students aren't always great at voicing where they're confused or when they need me to go back.

Now, I have *i-Ready* saying, 'Here's what they missed. Here are ideas for how to reteach it.' It is fantastic at getting to every kid at their own level, and actually, it makes my students appreciate me more! Because they feel like I really understand where they are."

"After experimenting with it, teachers could see that *i-Ready* would enhance, but not replace, their instruction," points out Boles. "And that's when we really started to see the excitement."
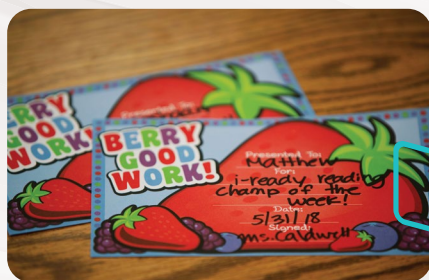
Teachers use certificates to recognize the "*i-Ready* Champ" of the week.

Teachers Talk about *i-Ready*

> When I was a new teacher, knowing that my students were getting individualized lessons on *i-Ready* was such a relief. **It actually showed me, 'OK, this is how you teach some of these standards.'**

> Report cards are subjective. *i-Ready* is much more objective, which has helped my interactions with parents. It's not just me looking and saying what I think a grade should be. **When parents come into conferences, I can tell them, 'Your child is struggling,' and I can show them where.**
>
> It's the same assessment, so the data is stable across time. Now that parents have been tracking it since their kids were in second grade, they are very comfortable with seeing it and setting goals.

> **As an upper grade teacher, I don't feel that comfortable with phonics instruction.** For those topics, it is super helpful that *i-Ready* goes into detail and shows me a corresponding lesson or activity I can pull to support my teaching.

Madeline Marshall
Fourth Grade Teacher
Sakamoto Elementary
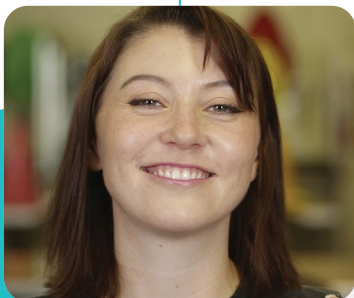
> **You don't have to read the manual! I don't prefer to read the manual, no offense.** I'd much rather learn by doing and get help from my younger colleagues who jumped right in and absorbed it through their pores. I'm not the technology generation, and I was able to learn *i-Ready*.

> **I give it as homework.** I don't want kids to burn out, so they have the choice: 'Blast through it Monday or Tuesday or do 10 or 20 minutes at a time. Switch off, if you want—math, reading, math, reading.' If they haven't met their Time-on-Task goal by end of week, they have to miss Fun Friday.

> In sixth grade you can have students who haven't been doing well for a number of years, and they can be very frustrated. Some have given up.
>
> **Last year, I started realizing the power of pulling the reports to show kids their improvement.** I called them back to a table to have a little discussion: 'Well, look where you were at the beginning of the year, and look where you are now.'
>
> I told them, 'You're the one who has been making this effort and look how it's paid off!' They were really pleased with themselves.

Lisa Reiss
Sixth Grade Teacher
Sakamoto Elementary

Some Lessons for Kindergarten

Joann Rowe, Kindergarten Teacher

Ledesma Elementary teacher Joann Rowe can relate to why kindergarten teachers are natural skeptics when it comes to getting a school's youngest children to learn using technology.

First Step: Logging in

"In the beginning, just logging in could take 20 minutes," says Rowe. "They'd click off their screen and couldn't figure out how to get it back. Once, we never even made it to the lessons. That was frustrating."

To smooth the way, Oak Grove's EdTech team implemented Clever Badges. The kids hold them up to a camera, and they're taken immediately to their *i-Ready* dashboard.

Second Step: Taking the Online Lessons and Quizzes

In addition to using the provided tutorials, Rowe led her class in taking lessons together on a Chromebook, allowing kids to see a demonstration of how to do things like drag and drop, "write" on one's hand, prompt pronunciation of Spanish cognates, and consider answers before submitting them.

Once they got past the learning curve, she says, things went much faster.

"It's like clockwork now!" laughs Rowe. "I can get 25 kids logged on to *i-Ready* and doing lessons within two to three minutes. We're aiming for 40 points of scale score growth this year, regardless of whether they're still learning letters and sounds or have moved on to decoding text."

Rowe, who has taught kindergarten for 22 years, acknowledges that for her, seeing growth is most important.

"Not every child is going to reach the same score. That's OK. To me, student success means every child moving forward, making growth. I've seen amazing growth with *i-Ready*. When I see those big gains, I am just so proud."

Advice on Dos and Don'ts

DO expect some bumps getting started, but also expect it to get easier over weeks—not months.

DO take time in class to establish digital readiness. Use *i-Ready* as a class before putting kids on individually. Model how to listen, watch, and interact with lessons.

DON'T wait to plan the logistics, and don't gloss over any details. Start early, channel generous support, and explore the *i-Ready* login alternatives designed to support Grades TK–1.

"DON'T give up!" says Joann Rowe. Adds Principal Tammy Unck: "We ended up seeing complete engagement with kindergarteners. Whatever it was they were working on, *i-Ready* just pushed them up, and they had a blast."

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Year 2: Buy-in for *i-Ready* Grows

While early adopters like Kusa were fully onboard, some teachers and administrators still had a few lingering doubts about *i-Ready* that needed to be addressed: "Is it really standards based? Is it truly rigorous enough? Boles recalls, "Teachers wanted confidence that they were using the best tools and resources for their kids, that the progress students made on *i-Ready* would translate to growth on the summative tests."

In the spring of Year 2, Oak Grove educators would get the confirmation they were looking for. Boles and her leadership colleagues gathered for the end-of-year progress review with Curriculum Associates, the creators of *i-Ready*. Based on the student proficiency levels and growth shown in *i-Ready* data together with teachers' observations of students in the classroom, Boles anticipated seeing meaningful progress on the summative tests. Soon thereafter came review of the state assessment results.

"We were excited to see the end-of-year gains that we made on the [Smarter Balanced assessment] and the CASP," she says. "In math, for example, the percentage of OGSD students across Grades K–8 achieving passing [Smarter Balanced assessment] scores increased a full five percentage points in just one year. The results reinforced that *i-Ready* really did align to the standards, and that finding helped 'move the needle' with buy-in among teachers and administrators—it was really a game changer."

i-Ready Is Aligned to the Standards

Below are excerpts from the *i-Ready Mathematics* lesson "Subtract Whole Numbers," which aligns with learning standard 4.NBT.B.4 and covers the use of the standard algorithm to subtract multi-digit whole numbers.

Year 3: An Emphasis on Usage Fidelity and Monitoring Data

In 2017, Boles moved from Principal of Parkview Elementary into her current role as Director of Educational Services. She consulted the district calendar to set the three Diagnostic administration windows for Aug. 21–Sept. 22, Nov. 27–Dec. 21, and May 14–June 1, and pondered strategies for going deeper with data across the sites.

In Year 3, she decided, OGSD would endeavor to . . .

1. **Focus on high-quality usage time and lesson scores.** The district goal was 90 minutes of *i-Ready* per week—45 in Math and 45 in Reading. Boles emphasized quality time with the program. She says, "*i-Ready* is not a babysitter. We want everyone using it with intention." That meant that teachers were observing and intervening, students were invested in their progress and staying on task—*i-Ready* can tell if you've left your lesson or are idle—and leaders were watching the numbers.
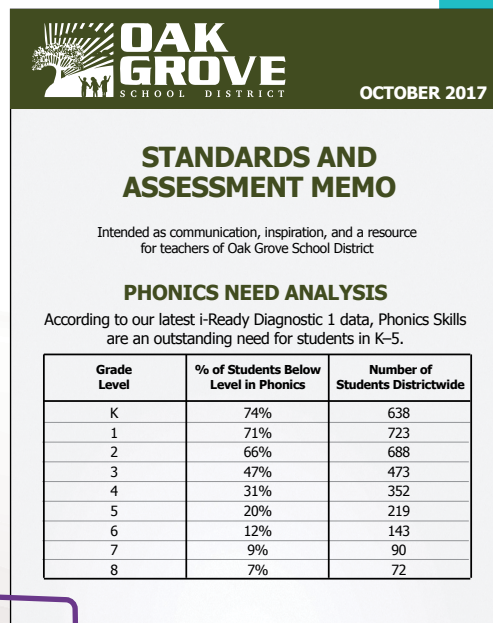
   OGSD also monitored lesson pass rates, aiming for a minimum score of 75 percent on each Lesson Quiz. To increase student focus and accountability, one instructional coach created an *i-Ready* Packet that reminded students of their Diagnostic scores and growth targets each time they logged in. It also required them to show their work and record their quiz scores. Teachers pulled the packets to review progress with students.

2. **Increase the visibility of *i-Ready* data districtwide.** Throughout the school year, Boles prominently featured *i-Ready* data and commentary in her newsletter, the Standards and Assessment Memo. Each month, she named the standout schools and recognized teachers whose classes had shown strong growth.

   Boles also set a districtwide Data Summit meeting after the second Diagnostic to review and reflect on the results. She acknowledges it can be difficult for leaders to find time to review the data, so she felt it important to consciously set aside this time.

3. **Use PLC meetings to discern, as a team, what the data is saying and what to do about it.** Boles gave her site leaders a PLC Implementation Roadmap to support the effort. At Sakamoto Elementary, seven-year veteran Principal Jenay Enna led a three-month cycle of inquiry using the question, "How does our weekly use of *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* impact our students' achievement?"

   Says Enna, "We set goals and we monitored them. We got to compare data month to month, window to window. It gave me an opportunity to look for bright spots to acknowledge, and teachers were lifted up by that."

OAK GROVE
SCHOOL DISTRICT

OCTOBER 2017

STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT MEMO

Intended as communication, inspiration, and a resource for teachers of Oak Grove School District

PHONICS NEED ANALYSIS

According to our latest i-Ready Diagnostic 1 data, Phonics Skills are an outstanding need for students in K–5.

Grade Level	% of Students Below Level in Phonics	Number of Students Districtwide
K	74%	638
1	71%	723
2	66%	688
3	47%	473
4	31%	352
5	20%	219
6	12%	143
7	9%	90
8	7%	72

When *i-Ready* pointed to a districtwide skill deficit in phonics, Boles circulated the above data in her newsletter.

Principal Jenay Enna reviews *i-Ready* data with her staff.

She continues, "It gave them a boost—'Let's keep going!' It really does help a teacher to know that someone's paying attention and to be able to say, 'My students are growing, and it's because of me.'"

4. **Pilot new components of *i-Ready*.** OGSD had learned of additional *i-Ready* features that they wanted to explore for future use. One of those was Standards Mastery, which uses brief and granular assessments—six questions, 10–15 minutes—that are intended to give prompt insight into students' grasp of one or two discrete learning standards.

Boles ran the pilot from February to May and made participation voluntary. Participating grade levels chose which standards to assess, and instructional coaches created and assigned the tests in *i-Ready*. Teachers reviewed the data and used it to inform instruction.
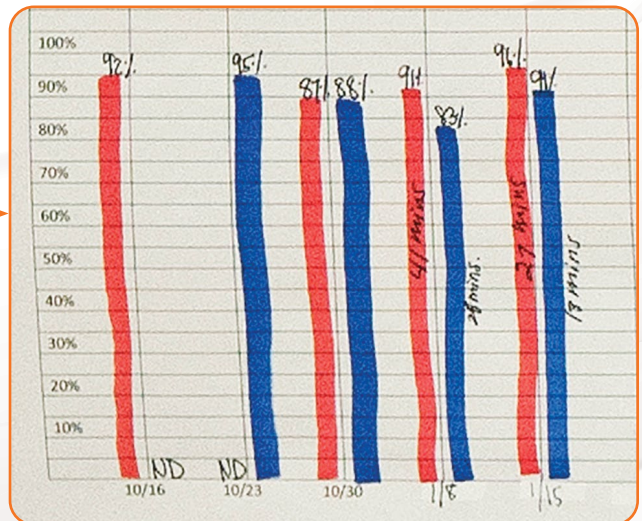
At Sakamoto Elementary, teachers graph each week's average lesson pass rate. The data appears on a bulletin board in the hallway.

i-Ready's Role in English Learner Reclassification

Nearly one in four students in Oak Grove are ELs. The vast majority speak Spanish at home, though 60 different languages are represented across the district. As such, the district stays current on the research, carefully monitors its investments, and extends training to all teachers, not just EL specialists.

The state of California stipulates four minimum criteria for certifying proficiency in English, one of which is administration of a valid academic skills assessment. To achieve reclassification, students must score comparably to the district's English-only population on this assessment.

For the 2017–2018 school year, Oak Grove elected to use *i-Ready Diagnostic* to fulfill the academic skills criterion. They also continued to use their state test, the Smarter Balanced assessment, for this purpose.

Says Boles, "The [Smarter Balanced] is taken in the spring, which can be limiting for reclassification. *i-Ready* provided us with three additional opportunities to fulfill reclassification criteria and gauge our ELs' performance throughout the year.

Plus, the Smarter Balanced is not given in first and second grade. So, *i-Ready* created a path to reclassification for those kids that was not there before."

With *i-Ready*'s online lessons, Oak Grove's ELs were receiving instruction aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards and to their individual placement level. And while *i-Ready* is not a language-acquisition platform, its lessons make use of best practices for instructing ELs.

To support ELs, *i-Ready* lessons include:

- An emphasis on high-utility vocabulary words and phrases

- Deliberate, contextual presentation of the English language at the word, phrase, sentence, and discourse level

- Higher-order thinking activities that use graphic organizers, guided instruction, discourse, and on-page corrective feedback

- Scaffolds to help Spanish speakers leverage their first language to understand the lessons and practice English, such as access to cognates

Self-portraits drawn by first grade ELs at Sakamoto Elementary

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As formal induction of the new English Language Proficiency Assessments for California neared, the state offered extra sittings of the outgoing California English Language Development Test. OGSD took advantage of those, and in April 2018, Boles announced the reclassification of more than 600 Oak Grove EL students. It was more than double the number reclassified the previous year.

Using *i-Ready* after School

To give her ELs more exposure to *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*, Boles started an After School Academy when she was Principal at Parkview Elementary.

She used Title III funds to offer a twice-weekly extended school day and invited ELs from Grades 4–6 to sign up. The kids used the time to work toward a goal of 90 quality minutes of *i-Ready* per week.

Presiding over the Academy was Luis Velasquez, a sixth grade teacher at Parkview, who continues in the role today. Velasquez circulates around the lab metering out a few candies to reward lessons passed and bolster end-of-day energy levels.

If he notices an individual or group struggling with a given lesson, he intervenes to do an impromptu tutorial or small group lesson.

Following Students after Reclassification

To keep a check on the rigor and competence of their protocols, OGSD follows reclassified ELs as a subgroup until they graduate.

The group, referred to by the acronym RFEP (Reclassified Fluent English Proficient), is currently the highest-performing student group within OGSD, and achievement continues to rise.
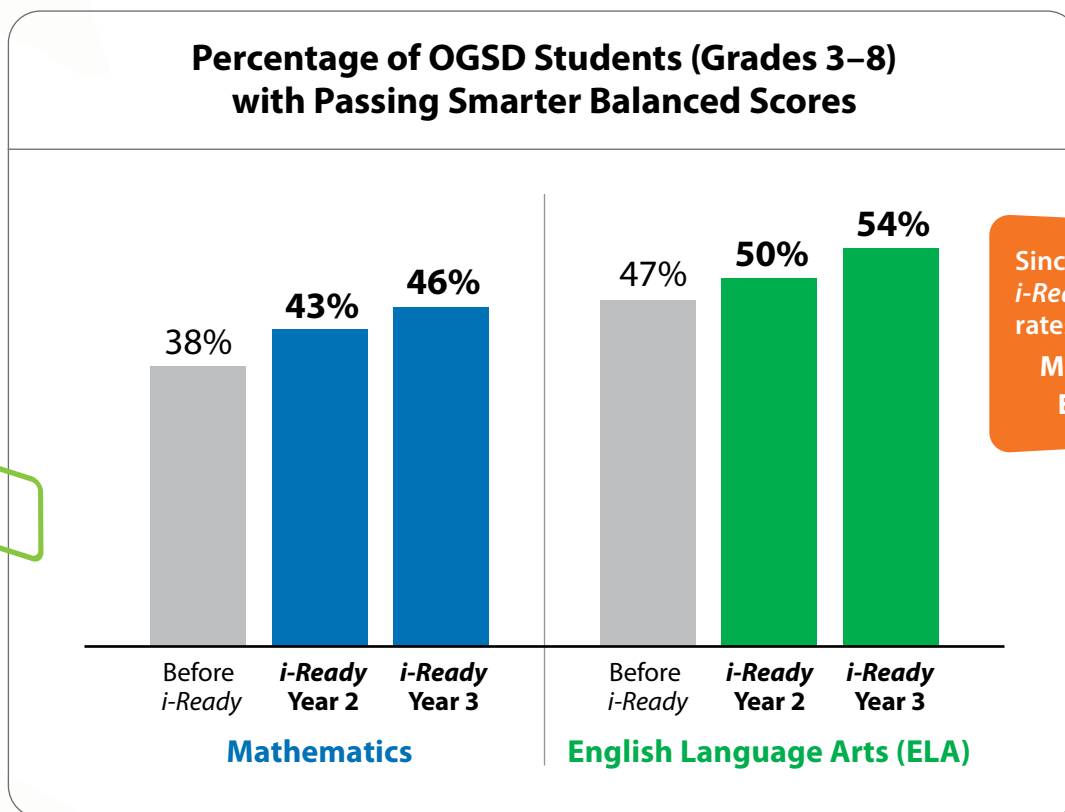
In 2018, the OGSD RFEP population tested as 68 percent and 79 percent proficient in English language arts (ELA) and Math, respectively, handily outperforming their counterparts in Santa Clara County and the state of California.

"That helps us feel confident that students who reclassify using our criteria will continue to score 'meets or exceeds standards' on the [Smarter Balanced]," says Boles.

> " Over three years, I have definitely noticed that *i-Ready* increases confidence in my ELs. It is also a great advantage to share that baseline with families when setting goals. For me, it's a wonderful tool. "
>
> —**Luis Velasquez**
> Sixth Grade & After School Academy Teacher

Ready for Some Results?

OGSD has made notable progress in increasing proficiency in both math and ELA among their elementary and middle school students.

Percentage of OGSD Students (Grades 3–8) with Passing Smarter Balanced Scores

	Mathematics			English Language Arts (ELA)	
Before i-Ready	38%		Before i-Ready	47%	
i-Ready Year 2	43%		i-Ready Year 2	50%	
i-Ready Year 3	46%		i-Ready Year 3	54%	

Since adopting i-Ready, proficiency rates have increased:
Math: +8 points
ELA: +7 points

✅ **OGSD's improvement in proficiency rates in Year 3 outperformed that of both the county and the state in both subjects:**
In Math, for example, Santa Clara County's 2018 results were flat and the state of California's results rose one point.

✅ **In Year 3, third graders who had used i-Ready for the largest portion of their schooling delivered the biggest grade-level improvement yet:**
Their results reflected an increase of 13 and 10 percentage points in Math and ELA, respectively, for Grade 3 since adoption of the program.

✅ **A performance gap between OGSD and other districts in Santa Clara County has begun to close in both subjects:**
A 14-point spread in Math has narrowed to 10.

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Beyond the Numbers

Of course, the data tells only half the story. Boles and her colleagues say *i-Ready* is impacting hearts and minds as students take in their achievement trajectories and, in turn, overcome false labels and uncover their future potential.

Says one third grader, "I struggle a lot in math. It makes me really excited when *i-Ready* shows me where I am. Knowing that I've improved makes me more confident, and I learn a lot better when I'm confident."

OGSD leaders say that overall, insight into their placements and goals has made students more invested in their learning. "In some lessons I go above level," notes a proud sixth grader. "In *i-Ready*, I can push myself to my limits."

Principal Unck's Tale of Two Students

"When the kids can see where they're at and what their goal is, they will live up to any expectation," says Unck. "Give them the time and materials they need, and they'll work hard. As a district, *i-Ready* is what really hit home for us."

Unck is one to be out on campus forging meaningful relationships with students, and she says *i-Ready* has helped her deepen her impact. There's the story of a short but fruitful stretch of time she had with a student in foster care:

Tammy Unck
Ledesma Elementary Principal

"There was one specific area, Geometry, where he had placed Level 1," she says. "I met with him, had a lot of data conversations, and together, we chose some extra *i-Ready* lessons. With a little help, he mastered it! His belief in himself really grew, and I was so impressed to watch this kid grow."

She's also used *i-Ready* to clue students in to the nature and attendant responsibility of their gifts. Out on the playground one day, Unck spotted a very academically strong sixth grader who had been acting out socially and therefore, the staff believed, squandering her leadership potential.

"These kids don't want to disappoint, and most of that is due to the relationships we have," says Unck. "They are strong, they are real, and our kids trust us."

She invited the girl to her office, where she logged in to *i-Ready*. She presented the girl's impressive performance data, telling her, "I see where you are and what you're capable of doing."

Unck's interest combined with the evidence in *i-Ready* made a big impression. She says, "From that moment forward, that student stepped up and became one of our biggest leaders at Ledesma."

Going Forward with *i-Ready*

"Our goals for *i-Ready* this year are threefold," Boles says as the 2018–2019 school year gets underway.

First, increased use of Standards Mastery. "It's a long time between Diagnostics," she says. "Our next step is collecting a bit more data in the interim so we can intervene accordingly."

Second, the district has made a commitment to professional development for the next three years. The schedule will be tailored to their needs, but most sites will have multiple *i-Ready* trainings during Year 4 and at least one in each of the years following. New staff members were trained on *i-Ready* in August at OGSD University, the district's after-school training venue, and special sessions for coaches and leaders are being planned.

Lastly, Boles says they're looking forward to trying the new *i-Ready* features that went live in fall 2018. OGSD teachers are eager to explore the redesigned dashboard and review the new Stretch Growth measure, which can help chart a path to on-grade level proficiency for students who are behind.

They are also awaiting the launch of the Spanish version of *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Mathematics. It's slated for 2019, which also marks the first year OGSD's Two-Way Spanish Immersion classes will take the Smarter Balanced assessment in English and in Spanish.

Having led her colleagues through the sharing of Oak Grove's story, Boles says, "It's great to be reminded of all the great things we've already done with *i-Ready*! I definitely would recommend it to other school districts. *i-Ready* has really helped support our district culture of data, reflection, and intervention."

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. . . Now, go see them in action!

Watch OGSD educators and students talk about their experience with *i-Ready* here:

bit.ly/watchogsd

Curriculum Associates