

CALIFORNIA & TEXAS SCHOOLS

Schools across the United States continue to search for best-of-breed products to support their students who struggle to learn English. While some states have active programs and adopted curriculum in support of language acquisition, other states have left teachers and districts on their own to find products and programs to integrate non-native English language learners. The award-winning E-Blocks® multimedia product has found its way into hundreds of schools, and this school report highlights the experiences of schools in California and Texas, where ELL/EFL students are benefiting from E-Blocks®.

An innovative product, the E-Blocks® approach provides unlimited hands-on interaction between children ages 5 to 10 and the subject matter. Activating all the senses, E-Blocks® allows children to absorb presented information. Sensory stimulation is a strong experiential learning trigger because it's engaging - children learn and remember what they see, hear and do. This is why E-Blocks® is such an effective learning tool: it provides a balance of visual, auditory and kinesthetic presentation, processing and practice of linguistic information. The E-Blocks® system is an innovative method for teaching English as a Second Language and for initial literacy exposure.

Texas

South Waco Elementary School
Waco Independent School District • Waco, TX
15,400 students, 32 schools
46% Hispanic, 80% economically disadvantaged
South Waco Elementary School, 620 students

There's a 'Newcomers' class in Waco's South Waco Elementary School. Children who enter South Waco without English language skills are given special instructional support in language acquisition as they transition into mainstream classrooms. Veronica Aguado, a bilingual teacher who teaches third and fourth grade newcomers at South Waco has been using E-Blocks® to support these students. To provide differentiated instruction, Veronica frequently arranges her 14 students for small group instruction. During this time, some children work with Rita Cardenas, the bilingual teacher's aide. Rita has worked with students at South Waco for several years. She guides the children while they use E-Blocks® and her observations confirm that the children have quickly adapted to and adopted the system, learning their team names to log-in to E-Blocks® and successfully and cooperatively work through the lessons.

While one group works on the system, the other student group works with the consumable workbooks provided by the

system. Integrating E-Blocks® as a supplemental tool, in conjunction with their traditional basal series language arts program, has increased student participation and confidence.

Ms. Aguado notes "Children are thinking for themselves, I love seeing that. I see their work on E-Blocks® building and showing real self-esteem in the children. This tool has proven to be a strong supplemental tool to their learning in many tangible and intangible ways. I am pleased with the work the students are producing and learning with Rita's support."

Dr. Ruth Harven, Principal at South Waco Elementary School supports the comments and observations from the 'Newcomers', she feels that E-Blocks® "is user friendly," and has heard "students speak enthusiastically about using the system."

Eastridge Elementary School
Amarillo Independent School District • Amarillo, TX
60 schools, approximately 30,000 students
40% Hispanic, 57% economically disadvantaged
Eastridge Elementary School, 670 students

Mrs. Linda Vaughn, Eastridge Elementary Principal, was heading out to the state TESOL conference over a year ago with a very specific mission in mind. She was concerned about the lack of unique programs available to the ESL

population in her school, where no fewer than eight languages are spoken. A group of administrators and teachers headed off to the conference and began their search. It was Linda who first saw E-Blocks®. She sat down to review and work with the program herself and experienced an 'Aha!' moment. As her staff and teachers reviewed the system for themselves, a purchasing decision was made that summer.

Eastridge Elementary, with an ESL population higher than that of the general district, has been integrating students from Laos, Vietnam, Somalia, Iraq, Burma and the Philippines, just to mention a few of the languages you might hear in the halls. Since students arrive with little to no English speaking skills, Linda deeply believes that the acquisition of English is key to students' personal and academic success.

"I believe E-Blocks® presents an opportunity for authentic learning, really engaging these kids at a critical learning point, and I am seeing their skills and knowledge transfer into other areas of performance. While the system is used by many children, it is the ESL students that benefit most. English is not the first or native language for more than half the population of my school. This is making a difference." While Linda knows the challenge of introducing and incorporating of new teaching tools, she steadfastly believes that any age group and ability level of students will benefit from the use of E-Blocks®. She intends to move the use of E-Blocks® to a wider group of students throughout the school, as she now has firsthand experience seeing the results in student learning.

Eastridge is both an ESL and Title 1 school, so programs to enrich core instruction need to have substance, and Mrs. Vaughn was unwilling to settle for anything less when finding products for her teachers and students. Ms. Alisa LeGrand, ESL teacher for grades 3, 4 and 5, has started to integrate E-Blocks® into her daily schedule. As a pull-out program, Alisa sees 60 students in groups of 5 or less, every day. Ms. LeGrand's students have been using E-Blocks® throughout the school year in support of their language learning needs. "Students were interested and able to use E-Blocks® without much intervention on my part, and I have seen improved spelling and general sound recognition. Students seem more willing and cooperative in helping one another sound out words, and this leads to comprehension. I'm looking forward to incorporating E-Blocks® more aggressively next year, following the lessons and support resources in the program, and I think our results will be measurable."

California

Thurgood Marshall Elementary School
Chula Vista Elementary School District, • Chula Vista, CA
15,600 students, 42 schools
64% Hispanic
Thurgood Marshall Elementary School, 650 students

Thurgood Marshall Elementary is a K-5 elementary school in San Diego County, California. E-Blocks® introduced the system to the teachers last summer. To gain experience and exposure to the system, the school placed E-Blocks® with teachers in kindergarten and first grade. The experience with kindergarten children confirmed how comfortable children feel with technology. "My morning students had access to E-Blocks® with help from a parent volunteer," says Annmarie Nurse, kindergarten classroom teacher. "The afternoon students wondered why they didn't get to use E-Blocks®, and perhaps next year we'll have an opportunity to give everyone a chance to use them, but the morning students had access to the system three to four times a week. They loved it. There were three to four students in each group, and they had a guided experience with the system. While there are a couple of students that are ESL, there was equal value to all the students. I think most important for the children was the system's reinforcement, the verbal 'good job' or 'right!' - kids loved that."

Linnæe Kezer is one of six first grade teachers, and she has been using E-Blocks® with her students during their guided reading time. Mrs. Kezer has 18 students, and during this instructional period she has the children work in pairs with E-Blocks®.

"I found that the kids did better in pairs, in part because they are so young, but also for classroom management. The students look forward to E-Blocks® time, it's interactive and the kids help one another very well in pairs. What has been most noticeable this year was improved spelling! I see children using more words, and bigger words, and I believe that's coming from their exposure to the blends and sounds and words being introduced through E-Blocks®." Mrs. Kezer had the help of a parent volunteer for part of the school year, supporting the children as they worked with E-Blocks® lessons. Since differentiated instruction is a key instructional strategy for this grade level, having time with students is a critical success factor. "Kids are excited to use E-Blocks®. They took to it easily and it focused on the key areas of

Schools Profiled

Borrego Springs Elementary School
220 students, Borrego Springs, CA

Eastridge Elementary School
670 students, Amarillo, TX

South Waco Elementary School
620 students, Waco, TX

Thurgood Marshall Elementary School
650 students, Chula Vista, CA



phonemic awareness, blends and decoding. There's no doubt that 'doing' while learning is a plus for little ones. I see a sense of excitement and self confidence as they work with E-Blocks®."

Borrego Springs Elementary

Borrego Springs School District • Borrego Springs, CA
4 schools , 650 students
70% Hispanic
Borrego Springs Elementary School, 220 students

Borrego Springs Elementary School in Borrego Springs School District is a PreK-5th grade school serving 220 students. Interim Principal, Charlie Garten, has been working with this school for several months and truly sings their praises.

"These teachers and students are amazing! The school jumped 89 points in their AYP last year, and they'd like to jump another 50 points this year. This achievement was done with a focus on the individual students, not on AYP. They would have expected a two, three or five point gain, but 89- that's truly wonderful."

Two teachers in Borrego Springs - Judy Coyle, Reading Specialist and Yvonne Edman, kindergarten classroom teacher- have been using E-Blocks® this past school year. Judy's experience with her students in their daily 90-minute language arts block is exemplary.

Judy's ELL students work in groups during their instructional time. At the 1st grade level, 10 students work with her and she moves them through centered areas of core instruction in small groups. She has incorporated E-Blocks® into students' daily instruction: While one group progresses through their adopted language arts programs from Houghton Mifflin, another team will be actively advancing through the lessons in E-Blocks®. With three teams of three or four students each the students work collaboratively when they sign-on to E-Blocks®.

The management system of E-Blocks® tracks where the students are in their progress through the software, so there is no time wasted in getting started with the program. Very quickly, Judy found her students were quite comfortable working independently with E-Blocks®. She has observed that ELL readers gain confidence and in some cases have become more verbal in whole class interactions. She has further noted "It's not necessarily the 'best reader' who excels with E-Blocks®. All students are given a fresh opportunity to shine. The kids really love E-Blocks® and in general, I feel that all the children are better spellers this year, and that cooperative behavior has translated beyond teamwork with E-Blocks® and into the general classroom."

Down the hall are 38 kindergarten students, and for some of them, their afternoon includes time with E-Blocks®, three days a week. Yvonne Edman's classroom experience is similar to Judy's observations. Her children work in small groups for various language center instruction. The groups are of mixed skill levels and she notes, "The children know exactly what to do now with E-Blocks®. It's easy to use and they are self-guided, very motivated and work very well helping one another with the E-Blocks® lessons. In general, all my students are benefiting from E-Blocks®, but I am particularly pleased with the language improvement of students for whom English is not their first language. The auditory component of E-Blocks® has clearly helped them gain skill and confidence more quickly than other supplemental tools. I wish I had had this product in years past when I had more ELL students with needs."

As the school year is winding down, the teachers and students will be looking forward to working with additional levels of E-Blocks® software next year. Mr. Garten summed up his observation of these students and classroom use of E-Blocks® this way:

"Students not only took initiative to use E-Blocks®, but they showed responsibility in working with the program and great pride in advancing through the software. It's an exciting, fun and instructionally strong product for students."

One further endorsement for E-Blocks® came unexpectedly, when Judy was absent from her classroom. A couple of fifth grade students suggested to their substitute teacher that they should be using E-Blocks® during their language arts period. The two enterprising students not only enrolled themselves in the program, but continued through all the lessons and while thoroughly enjoying their E-Blocks® experience, gained literacy competencies along the way. The enterprising students are a great example and resource to younger children!

Award Winning Product

E-Blocks® has been internationally recognized, receiving the prestigious WSA award in 2005 as Best e-Learning Solution and receiving a Bessie award and two AEP awards in 2006.



Ministério da
Ciência e Tecnologia



Patent pending. E-Blocks® and the E-Blocks® Logo are registered trademarks of Positive Informatica Ltda. © 2004 Positive Informatica Ltda. All rights reserved.

www.eblocks.net

