

## LANGUAGE! WEST ASHLEY HIGH SCHOOL

### **Summary**

LANGUAGE!™ The Comprehensive Literacy Curriculum is an intensive mastery-based language arts intervention that targets the needs of non-readers, struggling readers, and English learners by teaching English as if it were a foreign language. It accelerates them to grade-level proficiency by utilizing a sequential, cumulative, skill-based instructional format that addresses all learning styles, the five essentials components of reading as well as core writing skills.

Cumulative and sequential multisensory activities engage students while establishing skills in phonemic awareness and phonics, word recognition and spelling, vocabulary and morphology, grammar and usage, listening and reading comprehension, and speaking and writing. The LANGUAGE! instructional model weaves all of these necessary strands of literacy into the instructional steps of a daily lesson. Through six sequential, integrated steps, each lesson scaffolds content and instruction. With multiple entry points, LANGUAGE! places students according to skill level and is effective with diverse learning styles.

### **Demographics**

- *Target Settings:* General education classroom
- *Target Groups Served:* students scoring below the 60th percentile on group-administered standardized tests and who need to acquire knowledge of Academic Language as well as the structure and function of the English language
- *Districts Served:* Charleston County School District

### **Research and Evaluation**

*What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative?*

*Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works.*

In Charleston, the curriculum had been used exclusively with special education students. West Ashley High School Principal Mary Runyon saw those students' reading scores improving and decided to experiment and see whether it also would work for students who didn't have a disability. The school began the pilot program in Spring 2009 with one class that included 14 of its weakest freshman and sophomore readers. Many students made strong gains, and Runyon quadrupled the number of intensive reading classes for 2009-2010. They targeted incoming freshmen with the lowest reading scores; most read at a fourth-grade level or lower.

After one semester in the class, 81 percent of the students saw improvement. Ten students' scores increased by more than 15 points, while most students reading at this level improve by three points during an entire school year. Eighteen students improved by six to 10 points.

Current data as of May 2011 includes a comparison of two groups of students, the 1st time ninth graders, in Language!, and those who similarly tested at the same level and attended core classes without intervention. Fifty one students, noted above, who received intervention were compared to ninety-five of their peers who were scoring on the standardized test at the same level and received no intervention. To date, 65% of the intervention group is enrolled at grade level compared to 42% of the non-intervention group. The average credits earned by the intervention group for the year 09-10 was 6 credits compared to the average of 4 credits earned by students in the non-intervention group. Exclusion of the extra credit earned for the intervention still provided for an average of 5 credits per student in the intervention group when compared to the 4 credit average of the non-intervention group.

July 2011 results show 34 of the 43 students, or 79% of the intervention group as on track for graduation as juniors in the fall semester of 2011. Most notable; 68% or 29 of the 43 remaining 9th graders entering WAHS as reading 5th grade level and below participated in just 2 semesters of reading intervention and passed the HSAP exam this spring.

The program's results have been documented nationally, with at least two states adopting the program and multiple studies proving its effectiveness.

See also "Language! White Paper: Why We Need Comprehensive Literacy Solutions for Adolescents" and "Language! Systemwide Results".

### **Program Resources**

- *Annual Cost:* Training is required; the teacher kit is \$1300.00; the initial kits for students are \$65 each and replacement kits are \$25.00 each.
- *Funding Sources:* Student activity fees
- *Staffing Needs:* Certified English teacher for English elective credit
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* The curriculum includes all whiteboard lessons and an online assessment system so SMART or other technology board and computer would provide best advantage; otherwise dry erase board and overhead projector with markers would suffice. Students require folders, pencils, sticky notes, yellow, pink, and blue highlighters.
- *Partner Organizations:* none

### **In the News**

See also: <http://www.postandcourier.com/news/2010/feb/22/giant-strides/>

### **Contact Information**

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