

# Dodd Middle School Boosts Lexile Scores Across the Board with Vocabulary.com

SUCCESS STORY: Dodd Middle School, Cheshire Public Schools, Cheshire, CT



## Dodd Middle School at a Glance:

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Enrollment     | 800  |
| Race/Ethnicity | 87.4% White, 8.1% Asian,<br>2.4% Latino, 2% African American |

### CHALLENGE:

*Improve lexile scores among eighth-grade students.*

Dodd Middle School is located in an affluent community and is already one of the highest performing middle schools in the state of Connecticut (Source: City-Data.com analysis of 2010 test data). Yet, teachers at Dodd Middle School still sought to boost student scores on the Scholastic Reading Inventory test, administered in the fall and spring of each school year. The Reading Inventory measures reading growth on the Lexile Framework for Reading.

### SOLUTION:

*Implement Vocabulary.com in the classroom.*

During the 2014-15 school year, Dodd Middle School began a trial of Vocabulary.com. An early adopter was James Goffin, one of Dodd's eighth-grade language arts teachers. Goffin said that when he started piloting Vocabulary.com he looked at it as a "self-taught tech tool" and found that "it was pretty easy to master."

Goffin got his students, numbering approximately 100 across four different classes, to use Vocabulary.com, and he tracked their progress over the course of the school year. His students took to it enthusiastically. "The students find Vocabulary.com much more enjoyable and effective than conventional vocabulary instruction," Goffin said.

## **RESULTS:** *Across-the-board lexile gains among eighth graders at all levels.*

Eighth-grade students showed clear gains in their lexile scores on the Scholastic Reading Inventory from Fall 2014 to Spring 2015. "Using Vocabulary.com last year, I saw unbelievable success in the students' scores. Ninety-nine percent of the students increased their SRI scores and only one percent actually lost ground," Goffin said. He credits Vocabulary.com with facilitating success among students at all proficiency levels, and he has observed similar improvements in reading comprehension scores.

Along with the students' rapid progress on standardized tests, Dodd Middle School students could also be proud of their standings in the nationwide Vocabulary Bowl, based on the number of words mastered by all students at the school. Dodd regularly finished in first place in the monthly Connecticut state leaderboard for the Vocabulary Bowl.

**"Using Vocabulary.com last year, I saw unbelievable success in the students scores.."**

The students' achievements in the Vocabulary Bowl are shared via classroom announcements, on the school webpage, and in emails to parents. "Every month I put up the notice from Vocabulary.com that Dodd remains in first place," Goffin said. "It is a culture of success that previous students have worked hard to achieve and present students have a need to continue."

## **CONCLUSION:** *Dodd Middle School implements the Vocabulary.com Educator Edition throughout the school.*

Dodd Middle School purchased the Vocabulary.com Educator Edition for all teachers to use in the 2015-16 school year. Based on the successful implementation of Vocabulary.com in the previous year by James Goffin, all four of Dodd's eight-grade ELA teachers decided to coordinate their curriculum over the school year, in order to integrate Vocabulary.com into the instruction for all students.

"Each week we come up with vocabulary lists for the students to work on," Goffin explained. The teachers create their own lists to match the subject matter, and also take advantage of the library of readymade lists curated by Vocabulary.com.

Students are able to master words from the texts they are studying, from nonfiction texts like Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, to fiction texts like Walter Dean Myers' short story, "The Treasure of Lemon Brown." The vocabulary study is cross-curricular as well. "At times during the year, we add social studies vocabulary or science vocabulary to our lists," Goffin said.

Teachers are continuing to track student progress over the course of the school year using Vocabulary.com's Teacher Dashboard, a feature available to schools that subscribe to the Educator Edition. When Dodd Middle School signed up for the Educator Edition, Goffin said, teachers discovered just how useful the dashboard's tracking tools are. "I find the management is much easier with improvements readily seen on the dashboard," he said, adding, "I've been teaching vocabulary development since 1977. I'm in love with Vocabulary.com."