

Woodward Park MS Exceeds Goals for Literacy Gains After Using Vocabulary.com.

SUCCESS STORY: Woodward Park Middle School, Columbus, Ohio



Woodward Park MS at a glance:

Enrollment	851
Free or Reduced Price Meals	72.5%
Race/Ethnicity	66.7% African-American, 1.5% Asian, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 16.5% White/Caucasian, 6.9% two races

[source: StartClass.com]

CHALLENGE:

Disadvantaged students struggle to succeed because of vocabulary deficits.

Woodward Park serves students with high rates of ESL and mobility, with close to three quarters of students receiving free or reduced price lunch. Classes include inclusion rooms where special needs and mainstream students work together, as well as advanced classes for students on an accelerated track.

English teacher Rebecca Ondo identified vocabulary deficits as a key impediment to success for her students. "The kids know how to read," Ondo said. "They don't know what the words they're reading mean. I need them to understand what those words mean. I need them to see those words multiple times. I need them to master them."

SOLUTION:

Vocabulary.com was added as a literacy center in ELA classrooms.

Woodward Park began implementing Vocabulary.com in the 2015-16 academic year. As an early adopter, Ondo looked for ways to incorporate the vocabulary building resources effectively in her curriculum. She decided to use Vocabulary.com to create a literacy center in her classroom.

Ondo combined Vocabulary.com with other literacy centers to provide a balanced approach. "Now I can have a group reading, a group online working on vocabulary from the story we're reading, and another group working with me," she explained. After Ondo saw immediate success with using Vocabulary.com as a literacy center, other ELA teachers followed suit.

RESULTS: *Students achieve immediate literacy gains on the Measurable Academic Progress (MAP) test.*

Woodward Park administers the MAP (Measurable Academic Progress) test in the fall, winter, and spring. They were expecting gains of three to four points per student, but after introducing Vocabulary.com in the fall, teachers were surprised that literacy gains far outstripped that goal. Student success was so significant that the two lower categories of literacy scores on the test were depopulated entirely between fall and winter.

“I have special ed kids that went up 31 points,” Ondo said. “When you look at scores like that, it’s unheard of. When you put the whole system together – classroom instruction, working at home, being an independent learner – you see that these students are progressing. They’re reading on a higher level. And that’s what it’s all about, that growth.”

“I have special ed kids that went up 31 points,” Ondo said. “When you look at scores like that, it’s unheard of.”

In her pedagogy, Ondo discovered a synergy between Vocabulary.com’s question types and vocabulary teaching strategies outlined by literacy expert Robert J. Marzano. “Marzano has great strategies, and Vocabulary.com is using them. I can’t stress enough just how much kids can do with it when you integrate it into your reading program.”

Using the teacher dashboard in the Vocabulary.com Educator Edition, Ondo says she can quickly check in on students’ progress on an assigned vocabulary list or pull out words the class is struggling with to go over together in class.

CONCLUSION: *Vocabulary.com has been expanded to all subject areas.*

Taking advantage of the teacher-teams already in place at Woodward Park, ELA teachers are working with math, science, and history teachers on subject-specific vocabulary lists. In those classrooms, at home, during free periods, and in ELA, students are using the tool as a way to take charge of their own educations.

While Vocabulary.com has proven effective across different proficiency levels, Ondo finds that the higher-level students have become the most addicted to vocabulary learning. “Not all of my students jump on and do this but most of them are, and the ones that do are making huge gains,” Ondo reported. “My self-directed learners, they want more. I can’t always give them more, but Vocabulary.com has opened up a plethora of opportunities. Other ELA teachers using Vocabulary.com are having the same kind of success.”