



Schools Meet AYP after First Year of Structured Professional Development

Region 16 Education Service Center, Amarillo, Texas

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP®)

Challenge

The Region 16 Education Service Center (ESC) in Amarillo, Texas, supports rural schools in northwest Texas through a cooperative arrangement. In the fall of 2011, Cactus Elementary School, Crockett Elementary School, Morningside Elementary School, and Hereford Junior High School decided to work with the ESC to address the challenges they faced. The schools were struggling to serve large populations of English learners (ELs), as well as economically disadvantaged and refugee students, and had failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Each school had received School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding in addition to Title I and School Improvement support. Administrators from the schools and the ESC evaluated various solutions and selected the Pearson Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP®) to help teachers develop students' academic language while simultaneously providing instruction in the core content areas.

Implementation

Pearson SIOP® consultants worked closely with ESC staff to create a professional development plan customized to the needs of the schools. "Pearson's willingness to allow the ESC to create the model according to needs assessments crafted upfront has been huge," said Ray Cogburn, director of administrative services, Region 16 Education Service Center.

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The goal was to meet or exceed AYP targets by helping students acquire the grade-level academic language they needed in different content areas. The training would also focus on language objectives and instructional techniques to address students' lack of language skills in general.

Although the ESC had some experienced SIOP® consultants on staff, the team determined that additional consultants from Pearson would be needed to help teachers implement SIOP®. The implementation began in November 2011 with an initial 3-day training by Pearson and significant follow-up support—17 days at each school—that included coaching, modeling, and observation feedback.

In addition, six SIOP®-trained coaches from the ESC spent time in every school every week, working with the same teachers as the Pearson consultants. The ESC coaches helped teachers address immediate classroom needs and utilize the SIOP® protocol, focusing primarily on the low-language learners. It was this "layered" approach that helped the schools make such substantial gains in such a short time, according to Shirley Clark, Region 16 manager of accountability, school improvement, and Title I. "We could have done one or the other type of training, but the layered approach to professional development made all the difference and was key to the outcome," she said.

Initially, many teachers were hesitant about implementing the new instructional approaches, but over time they felt empowered by the improvements in student performance, as students were increasingly able to learn difficult content-area concepts and a new language at the same time. "I began to hear comments like 'SIOP® has completely changed the culture of our school,'" said Ms. Clark.

Strong relationships developed between teachers and consultants, with the Pearson consultants providing impartiality and continuity and the ESC consultants providing constant on-site reinforcement. "Pearson matched the consultants very carefully to each school, and powerful relationships resulted that have broken down barriers. Teachers now see that the consultants are there to be their partners," said Ms. Clark.

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—Shirley Clark, Manager of Accountability, School Improvement,
and Title I, Region 16 Education Service Center

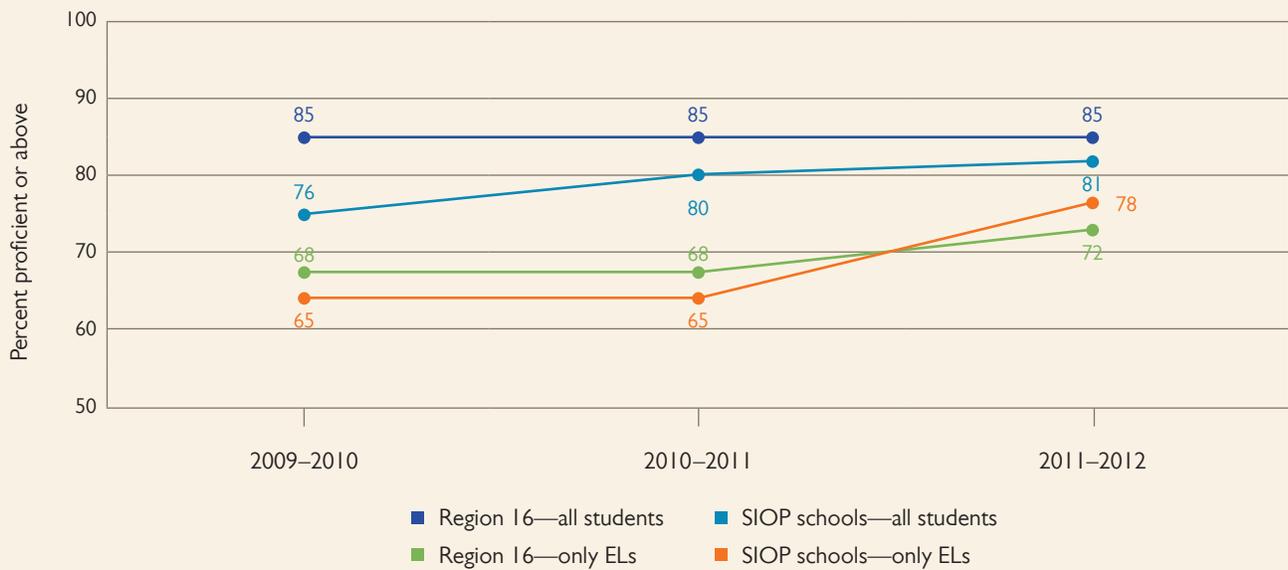
A third “layer” has now been added to the implementation—SIOP® coaching and implementation training for four or five leaders from each school—so that the schools can start to build their own support systems at the local level.

English learners achieved impressive gains in math in the four schools; the achievement gap shrank from 15 percentage points to only 3 percentage points after SIOP® was implemented. “We are very proud of the successes we experienced last year and are looking forward to great outcomes this year as well,” said Ms. Clark.

Results

In the 2011–2012 school year, because Texas was transitioning from the TAKS to the STAAR assessment program, the state conducted a bridge study to determine the equivalency of STAAR scores to TAKS scores. The bridge study showed that all four schools had achieved AYP after the first year of SIOP® implementation. Crockett Elementary had exited school improvement status.

SIOP Schools Close the Achievement Gap for ELs by 12 Percentage Points



Percentage of students achieving proficiency or above in mathematics on the TAKS in 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 and on the STAAR in 2011–2012, with STAAR scores converted into TAKS equivalent scores