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FEBRUARY 25, 2016

# How One District Uses Analytics to Realize Consistent Literacy Gains

Southwest Parke Community Schools now sees Lexile scores rise at an average of 10 to 20 points per month, thanks to Achieve3000.



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At a time when many educators struggle to use student data to inform instruction, one western Indiana school district has found a way to use analytics to fuel consistent growth in their students' reading levels.



An Achieve3000 district since 2012, students at [Southwest Parke Community Schools](#) are now seeing their Lexile scores rise at an average of 10 to 20 points per month – a gain Rachel Porter, digital curriculum integration specialist, attributes to keeping an eye on the numbers.

“If Lexiles go down, we take a deeper look to make sure we’re not getting off track,” she said. “It’s a big part of our success.”

### **Preparing for the Common Core**

Taking a look back, Rachel shared her story about how the district came to adopt Achieve3000 for their two elementary schools and junior-senior high school during the 2012-2013 school year.

“At that time, Indiana was on a path toward Common Core,” said Rachel. “As we were looking at Common Core standards, it was obvious that the rigor had greatly increased. We knew students were already struggling with testing and reading on par, so we felt like we needed a solution to address the new expectations we saw coming down the pipe.”

The district was also looking for a digital curriculum to replace textbooks as part of their 1 to 1 initiative.

That's when they discovered Achieve3000.

### **The Decision to Adopt**

After attending a conference session that featured Achieve3000, Rachel said she and her colleagues had found the solution they were looking for.

"We really didn't experiment or look deeper into other programs because we fell in love with Achieve3000," she said. She pointed out that the case studies and the fact that the program was research-based and well-established were major factors in the decision-making process.

She also appreciated being able to see results for districts that had similar demographics to theirs. (According to Rachel, 60 percent of Southwest Parke Community Schools students receive free or reduced-price lunch.)

"Other programs get great results in schools with affluent populations and resources," said Rachel. "It's easier for those schools to have success. I wanted to see success in schools that have the same demographics as we do. If it's working for those schools, it will work for us."

### **A Surprising Revelation**

Once their students began working with Achieve3000, Rachel discovered that they needed more reading help than originally thought.

"When we first started using the program, we were shocked and devastated at how far behind students were," she remembers.

She added that, in the past, they didn't have [Lexile levels](#) nor any other way to measure individual students to see if they were progressing or not.

"We knew our kids weren't as good at reading as they should have been, but it wasn't until we took that first LevelSet assessment that we realized we desperately needed the program because they were really behind."

### **The Path to Reading Success**

When the district got started with Achieve3000, they decided to implement the program in grades 3-9 only, but then concluded that, in order to provide continuity and realize maximum gains, it made sense to have the program in all classrooms.

"We started working with teachers and students in the high school," said Rachel. "We would go into classrooms and give the kids a little talk about why we were using Achieve3000. They were grumbly about it."

In addition to talking to students about the reading skills needed for [college and career](#), Rachel says the district created individual reading plans for the students. It was then that they decided to extend the licenses to the higher grades.

"We realized that when they become a sophomore, we were going to pull Achieve3000 out from under them," she said. "So, we immediately purchased for grades 10-12 to help give students the support they needed to keep progressing throughout their senior year."

To help their teachers become more comfortable with Achieve3000, Rachel began creating and distributing her own five- to 10-minute tutorial videos.

"Achieve3000 has really great training materials built in – the learning paths are very

well done and there are plenty of video tutorials and how-to docs," she said. "It's not necessary for people to make their own videos."

However, she added, teachers are far more likely to watch a five-minute video from someone they know has their specific needs in mind, as opposed to watching a general overview.

"When a teacher sends a question to me, I make a video, because those are the things teachers need most," she said. "It's a familiar person, and they know I have their interests and perspectives in mind."

Rachel also uses her videos to communicate successes and help boost staff morale, posting many of them on YouTube for easy access.

"The teachers work so hard to use it properly, so they need to know it's working," she said. "It's also good PR for the school to let others know what we're doing."

### **Using Analytics to Propel Students Forward**

When Rachel talks about the success the district has seen with Achieve3000, she points out three areas:

- accessibility
- using the program with fidelity
- analyzing student data to help keep students moving forward

With their 1 to 1 program, she notes that it's easy for students to access Achieve3000 when and where they need it – an important factor since students use the program as part of their curricular materials in all subject areas.

“A teacher might begin an English lesson, and then students get on Achieve3000 to read, apply a concept, or find evidence,” she said. “With our 1 to 1 initiative, there are no limitations to when we can access the program. We don’t have to schedule computer lab time because it’s always available.”

In order to keep their students progressing, Rachel frequently uses the real-time analytics in Achieve3000 to look for trends and issues that might need to be addressed, and shares her findings with her teachers.

Each month, she provides teachers with visual graphs that they can post in their rooms to track progress. The graphs cover three key metrics:

1. [Lexile Growth](#)
2. Class Average Score (they strive for at least a 75 percent average)
3. Number of Articles Read Per Week

“We monitor all three to make sure we’re on track,” said Rachel. “In classes in which students don’t read two articles per week or the percentage is low, we don’t see much growth.”

She added that when they don’t see month-to-month Lexile gains, they start “digging deeper into the analytics.”

“I love the data that Achieve3000 provides us with,” she said. “If we see a red flag, we have so much we can dive into to find out what caused us to see a decrease. A new student with a low Lexile can completely change our dynamics, as can a student who has started getting articles as invalid because they’re not putting in the effort.”

In the latter case, Rachel says teachers can then sit down and have a conversation with

students to help get them back on track.

Rachel says that, although ongoing monitoring is crucial to their success, they need to ensure that the process is not too time-consuming.

“Teachers just don’t have time in their schedule to take a look at all of the data, even if it’s accessible,” she said.

She added that, in the beginning, the teachers were defensive about having yet another thing to worry about, but now they rely on the information and look forward to it. Once a quarter she also schedules time for teachers to analyze the data themselves.

Finally, she can’t stress enough that none of their gains would be possible unless the teachers are using Achieve3000 to its fullest potential.

“The program works,” she said. “And it works best when we use it the way we were trained to use it.”

### **The Bottom Line**

The dedicated efforts of Rachel and her teachers are paying off.

Each month, said Rachel, they see most grade levels growing between 10 and 20 Lexile points.

“Sometimes if we see a bigger jump, we give a special recognition to the class that achieved more,” she said. “The gains are definitely more than we would be getting if we weren’t using Achieve3000.”

She added that schools not using any form of differentiated intervention typically only see 52 growth points over the entire school year.

The district has also seen increases in the students' levels of college and career readiness, said Rachel.

"On a district-wide level, we want to shift from lower to higher categories of readiness," she said. "We've seen a 1 percent shift in each category each month. Students are slowly shifting from being far below grade level to where they're supposed to be according to expectations."

In looking at the data, said Rachel, students wouldn't be on track for graduation if it weren't for Achieve3000.

"When you extrapolate the data without Achieve3000, students are nowhere close to graduating at grade level," she said.

"We had anticipated initial growth and a plateau, but we're halfway through our fourth year with Achieve3000 and we're still seeing the closing of the gap. If we keep using it consistently, we're going to get them there."

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