

 Measuring Up.

Measuring Up *Live Intervention*

Helps High School
Students Pass Exit Exam



Research

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Van Nuys High School

Los Angeles Unified School District Van Nuys, CA

School Profile

School: Van Nuys High School

Location: Van Nuys, CA

Grades: 9–12

Principal: Judith Vanderbok

School Population: 3,500

District: Los Angeles Unified School District

District Demographics

Free and Reduced Lunch 75%

English Language Learners 20%

Special Education 8.5 %

Special characteristics predominantly Hispanic

THE CHALLENGE

With an enrollment of more than 600,000 students, the Los Angeles Unified School District is the second largest in the country, serving a diverse population representing multiple cultures and more than 70 languages. In the heart of the sprawling San Fernando Valley is the city of Van Nuys, termed by the *Los Angeles Times* a “melting pot of ethnic groups and home styles.” Van Nuys High School, whose large student population is primarily Hispanic, faces the particular challenge of meeting the literacy needs of more than 500 English Language Learners (ELL), as well as some 250 Special Education students.

BROAD-BASED INTERVENTION STRATEGY

With the goal of increasing the number of students mastering the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and the California State Test (CST), in the spring of 2011 the school began a broad-based intervention program targeting their at-risk student population. Included were ninth-graders who would take the CAHSEE for the first time in their 10th-grade year, as well as grade 10 through 12 students who had previously failed the test. Under the direction of assistant principal Phyllis Baer, data and intervention coordinator Amira Saunders, and Title 1 coordinator Kevin Chong, Van Nuys instituted a program that included both seventh period intervention classes and a Saturday morning class that would meet for the eight weeks preceding the spring CAHSEE testing.

MASTERY EDUCATION FRIENDLY AND COST-EFFICIENT

With more than 600 students enrolled in either the seventh period class, Saturday school, or both, Ms. Saunders crafted a math and English/language arts intervention curriculum with Mastery Education *Measuring Up MyQuest* (formerly Practice Path) materials as a centerpiece. *Measuring Up MyQuest* offers students individualized practice and skill building exercises through engaging online and printed activities, assessments, and games. With such a large number of students to accommodate, *Measuring Up MyQuest's* automated assignment creation and assessments, which allow students to take charge of their own learning and free up

teachers to work one-on-one with struggling students, were beneficial. *Measuring Up MyQuest's* strands and skills are customized to meet the California state standards, something not available in most vendor products, and the short formative assessments are delivered through either traditional or game modes, which allow educators to personalize the learning experience for each student.

Ms. Saunders's decision to choose *Measuring Up MyQuest* was based on cost-efficiency and ease of use. In a time of dramatic budget cutbacks, she says, *Measuring Up MyQuest* was much more affordable than many other vendor offerings. "With *Measuring Up MyQuest*, it was also really easy to hit the ground running. It was a breeze to set up and get teachers going."

SELF-PACED, ENGAGING INSTRUCTION

Just after the winter break in 2011, Van Nuys deployed its intervention strategy. With help from Mastery Education professional development specialists, Kurt Kaufman and other teachers involved began conducting sessions with students. Kaufman, a 13-year veteran English teacher, was one of the educators teaching the Saturday school intervention classes, which were three hours long. Kaufman says that in order to keep such long sessions interesting to students, the course design comprised student rotations among large and small group instruction, offline activities, and online practice on *Measuring Up MyQuest* in the computer lab.

Kids liked the fact that they got the feedback right away, says Kaufman. The information they received provided the kind of granular feedback that allowed them to closely monitor their progress. The ability to easily access the percentage of right answers on current and earlier sections, their history of progress including what they'd finished and didn't finish and what their reading ability rating was, helped inspire students to take an interest in their own learning.

In combination with the software, Van Nuys used Mastery Education's *Measuring Up* books in English and math, which reinforced students' essential skills from entry to exit levels through worktexts. In English/language arts students practiced vocabulary skills and recognition of content-area words in relation to social studies, math, science, and language arts, as well as intensive work around vocabulary skills dealing with context clues, multiple-meaning words, prefixes, suffixes, and word parts.

Ms. Saunders says that even though the *Measuring Up MyQuest* material aims at a lower grade level, it worked well for the at-risk

"For students with low skills, motivation is essential," says Kaufman. "The balance of skill exercises and games in Measuring Up MyQuest worked well and gave students a break from the monotony of straight instruction."

"In an era when schools are being asked to do more with less, the Mastery Education instructional experience has proven a great return on investment."

high school kids, who enjoyed the activities. Says Kaufman of the activities, "It was a fun way to practice without being regarded as childish."

RESULTS

- Van Nuys High School's comprehensive intervention strategy paid off. When students took the CAHSEE in the spring of 2011, the results were dramatic.
- CAHSEE pass rates in English/ language arts went from 74.9 percent in 2010 to 84.2 percent in 2011, and scores in math over the same time period soared from 77.1 to 85.7 percent.
- Students also improved their performance in both English/language arts and math on the CST.

INTO THE FUTURE

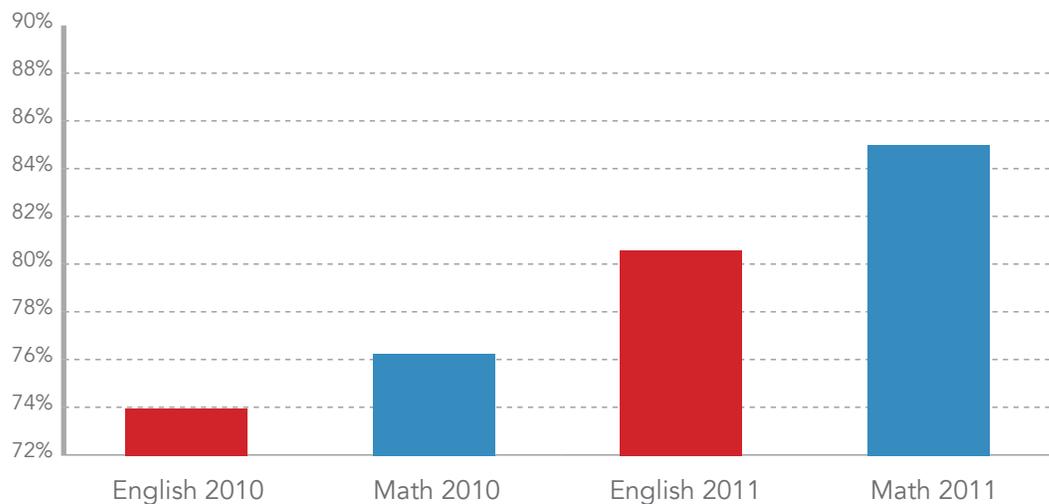
Kaufman says the intervention strategies instituted in the 2010–2011 school year were well received and the school plans to use them in the future. On a personal level, he plans to continue his involvement with the program with the MyVision piece as a central component. "It was a good blend of serious work with fun mixed in. With each component including a number of strands and skill categories, there was more than enough in the program to fully cover our course sessions."

"We were thrilled that the scores in the English exit exam essays went up by ten percent for the lowest performing students,"

~ Ms. Saunders
Van Nuys High School

VAN NUYS HIGH SCHOOL
LA Unified School District

■ % Passing English Language Arts
■ % Passing Mathematics



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