



Preparing for Standardized Testing by Focusing on Vocabulary and Question Types



Anne Stehly

📍 Rio Lindo Elementary School / Grade Level: 3

📍 Rio School District / Oxnard, CA

👤 User since 2020



The Challenge



With a wide range of abilities in her third-grade classroom, Anne Stehly was finding it hard to reach all of the students, half of whom are English Language Learners. Since third grade is the first year that students take the state standardized tests, she needed to focus on test-taking skills and question types that aligned with the test.

She was looking for a reading tool she could use to challenge the students at their levels. She also wanted to be able to get data from the tool, so she could track their progress.

Anne's school, Rio Lindo Elementary, has "WIGs," which are "Wildly Important Goals." There's a school WIG, a class WIG, and individual WIGs. Anne's WIG was for her class to increase its average Lexile Level to 600, and she decided to try using ReadTheory to meet this goal.

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I love the quality of the ReadTheory questions. They're very high-level and prepare students for standardized testing. I really appreciate all of the vocabulary, too.



The Solution

At the beginning of third grade, students need help easing back into the school routine. Anne's first lessons this year involved printing ReadTheory tests for her class to do together so that they could hold class discussions.



She quickly saw that ReadTheory was the invaluable tool she needed. She now has the students work individually on ReadTheory in class on their Chromebooks three or four times a week when some students are pulled out of the class for small group instruction. When she sees students' scores drop on ReadTheory, she goes over the questions with them individually to check for understanding.

She had the students complete even more passages right before the standardized test, in an effort to increase their stamina. The badges awarded for correct answers motivate her students to reach their reading goals.



The Impact

ReadTheory has challenged the high-level kids and the strugglers at their levels. Anne appreciates these varying levels of questions. Questions for which the answers can easily be found in the passage get the students motivated. She says, "We have achieved our reading goals several times this year. We started with a class average of 275 Lexile level and met our 600 Lexile level goal!" The whole class celebrated when they met this goal and even surpassed it recently, reaching a level of 619.

She has taken screenshots of certain ReadTheory questions to discuss the wording with the class. She'll break down the questions so students understand what is being asked. For example, she will discuss the meaning of the word "passage" or questions that include phrases like "as close to." They talk about questions that ask if the answer is choice 1, choice 1 and 2, etc. She says, "On the lower end of the Lexile scale, most of the questions are 'right there' questions or literal questions. They need to look for the answer in the passage, and there is no excuse to get those wrong. Then we talk about questions that they have to infer and be a detective with, and how that is leveled up and a higher level of thinking." These test-taking skills are valuable and can make a positive difference in standardized test scores.

Anne recently took a proactive approach by surveying her students about ReadTheory. On a scale of 1-5, most students rated ReadTheory as a 5! The students said that they enjoy earning badges as incentives and viewing their own reports about grade level and Lexile level.

Another tremendous help to Anne's students from ReadTheory is the vocabulary and the automatic feedback. One student states, "I like using ReadTheory because it helps me learn from my mistakes and learn new words that I don't know." Another student says, "It helps me find words I have not seen before." These words help them tackle the English language while also becoming better readers and test takers.

Anne appreciates that the question types align with the standardized CAASPP test. She says, "My students are never discouraged by challenging passages because their Lexile level has grown so much over the months, and they know that with continued effort they will reach their next reading goal!"

She recently started looking into the prepared lessons available on the ReadTheory site and is excited to use them soon. Anne and her colleagues continue to bounce ideas off one another and inspire each other and the students. After speaking to her staff about ReadTheory at a meeting, she is looking forward to many of them signing up for it for the upcoming school year.

