

## CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

# Lindsay Unified School District: Empowering and motivating for today and tomorrow

## Lindsay Unified School District, Lindsay, California

Lindsay Unified School District, which serves more than 4,000 learners, is located in California's agriculturally rich San Joaquin Valley. Lindsay is a small, rural community home to a large population of immigrant families. Lindsay is composed of a high percentage of families living below the federal poverty level and many of the district's learners come from migrant families who work in the surrounding fields and production areas. In 2007, the district began the work of transformation to better serve its learners and implemented the performance-based system, a competency-based grading model that emphasizes mastery and personalizing in learning.



### School district

|                             |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Learning communities</b> | <b>9</b>     |
| Elementary schools          | 6            |
| High schools                | 2            |
| Charter schools             | 1            |
| <b>High school learners</b> | <b>1,150</b> |



- Five years of districtwide academic gains
- ELA grade 9: LHS had an API gain of 31 points
- Increases in the percentage of learners on the content levels consistent with their grade level:
  - All learners ELA: 7%
  - English learners ELA: 6%
  - Migrant ELA: 9%
- Increases in the percentage of learners on the content levels consistent with their grade level (ELA Dual Immersion Program):
  - All learners: 13%
  - English learners: 16%
  - Migrant: 37%



## Amalia Lopez | Lindsay Unified School District

Amalia Lopez is a curriculum and instruction specialist in Lindsay Unified School District. At the core of her work is the guiding belief that all students can learn if all educators are willing, all opportunities are present and if learners are empowered to take control of their learning. She develops curriculum and assessments for learners in 6th - 12th grade in Lindsay's performance-based system, provides support and professional development for district personnel, and facilitates the instructional use of district curriculum support systems, including DreamBox Reading.

### Personalized instruction / alignment with CCSS

#### Q: What advice would you offer to educators who are preparing students for college and careers?

A: I think there are two key questions that every educator focused on college and career readiness should ask themselves:

1. How will you provide personalized reading instruction to every one of your kids?
2. Do you know each student's specific needs for college and career readiness? Exactly which standards need attention? Is it text structure? Comparative reading skills? Or something else? Which standards does that specific student need to develop?

I don't know a single teacher who can answer these questions honestly without a program like DreamBox Reading.

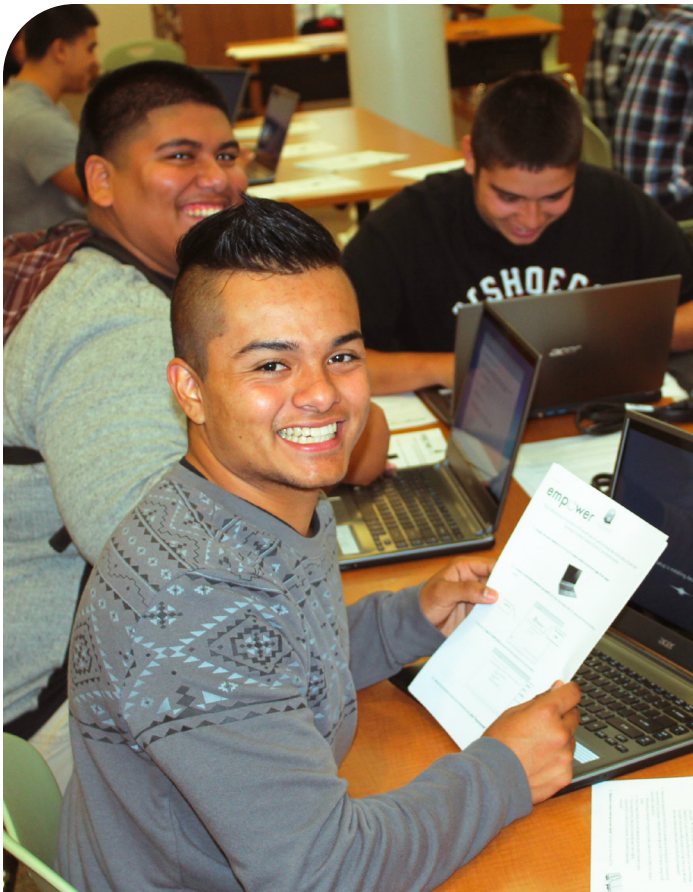
#### Q: How well does DreamBox Reading align with Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

A: It's my favorite thing about it. The way DreamBox Reading aligns to the CCSS allows us to hold the students to mastery of those standards. DreamBox Reading provides a clear view of student performance for each standard – we can look at R1, R6, R9 and see how that student is performing and focus development on the standards that need it. DreamBox Reading has also helped us, as a district, consider the broader needs for instruction. I can't imagine our lives without it now.

### Lindsay's performance based system



| Traditional<br>(Time-based learning)                      | PBS<br>(Performance-based learning)  |
|---|--|
| Movement based on time                                    | Movement based on mastery of content   |
| Learning happens only in the classroom                    | Learning takes place anytime, anywhere                                       |
| Driven by textbooks                                       | Driven by needs of learners  |
| Teacher-centered decision-making                          | Learner-centered decision-making   |
| Focus is learning basic skills in different subject areas | Focus on critical thinking and problem-solving skills across content areas   |
| Teacher is the only judge of quality student work         | Self, peers, teachers, administrators, other stakeholders judge student work |
| Prepares learners for industrial-age jobs                 | Prepares learners for 21 <sup>st</sup> century jobs                          |



**“After using DreamBox Reading, they’re ready to meet the independent reading demands of college and the workplace.”**

**Unique needs of high school readers: stamina, interest and motivation**

**Q: Developing reading skills at the high school level can be different from earlier grades. In your experience, what are some of the key factors for achieving success with high school students?**

A: I was a high school English teacher. Our district began with DreamBox Reading at the high school level. One of the key factors for these readers is stamina. When students reach high school and struggle with reading, they just don’t have the stamina they need. But when students go through DreamBox Reading, they build that stamina and it alleviates frustration. After using the program, they’re ready to meet the independent reading demands in college and the workplace.

Another important factor is helping students become critical consumers of text. It’s essential that these students have comprehension skills like understanding the author’s intent, drawing conclusions and more. DreamBox Reading has established a bank of texts that help kids develop these skills and push them to be good, critical consumers of text.

**Q: Motivation is often mentioned as another unique issue for high school readers. Has DreamBox Reading helped in this area?**

A: We hear it from all our teachers. Apathy and negative attitudes are critical obstacles to overcome. At the outset, most of these readers lack academic confidence. When they’re asked to read, it’s not something they’re excited about – especially if they have a history of struggling with literacy. But DreamBox Reading has changed the way they think about reading. When they can pick the text they want to read, and when they can engage with that text online, the way they want, when they want – then reading becomes something better. It becomes more like what they’re used to outside school. Now they experience the reading in school in a very different way than what they’re used to, and they’re more interested and excited about it.

**Q: How has the online access to DreamBox Reading impacted your students?**

A: We're a one-to-one district. We've put an online device into the hands of every student. So, DreamBox Reading allows us to provide our high school students with the ability to develop their reading skills outside the classroom. Now they can go home, spend time at night, over vacation breaks, and over the summer, and continue to develop as readers. We can monitor their work at home and the reading goals they've set in a way we'd never been able to do before.

**Individual examples of student success**

**Q: Are there any specific examples of student success with DreamBox Reading you'd cite?**

A: There are so many wonderful examples. One that comes to mind is a student who graduated last year. She had struggled with reading for a long while. And as she entered her senior year, she really wanted to graduate. She used DreamBox Reading and had great results – in fact, she grew six grade levels in one year. Our high schools have an exit panel to interview graduating seniors. This high school graduate told the panel, "I don't know where this program was five years ago. Because I learned how to read this year."

**"Our learners saw significant gains in Lexile growth in just 25 hours."**

**Research-proven Results**

**Q: How have you measured your results with DreamBox Reading?**

A: Our districts receive federal funding, so we're held accountable for reading improvement. We use the Scholastic Reading Inventory. So, programs that are proven to deliver results are essential for our district. In fact, we have a research coordinator on staff and he dug deeply into the claims that DreamBox Reading makes about effectiveness. Specifically, he looked at the claim that 40 hours use of DreamBox Reading delivers significant gains. His findings showed that it didn't even take 40 hours. Our learners saw significant gains in Lexile growth in just 25 hours. So, what DreamBox Reading says about effectiveness is even more true for Lindsay kids. Our learners saw significant gains in half the time that you're reporting.

**Q: How has DreamBox Reading impacted the way you work with your teachers who develop high school readers?**

A: Using DreamBox Reading has essentially allowed us to give our teachers a crash course on what it means to teach reading. We've invested time with our teachers to address how reading must be developed through the grades. We've been able to change the notion that you teach kids the foundational skills and then you're done. Adolescent reading begins after the foundational skills. Once the foundational skills are learned, it's time for the learner to read to learn.

We're in a rural area of California, and developing new teachers is an ongoing task. DreamBox Reading helps us maintain a bridge to teaching reading. We can make it clear to our teachers why the skills that DreamBox Reading develops should follow the foundational skills that are taught in programs like Lexia.



Learn more.  
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