



A ReadTheory Story

Increasing Adult Literacy Skills to Lift Families Out of Poverty



Kevin Jordan

📖 Maxine Waters EPC/ Slawson Occupational Center / Grade Level: Adult ESL Education

📍 Los Angeles Unified School District / Los Angeles, CA

👤 User since 2018



The Challenge



Kevin Jordan teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to adults in the morning and evening for the Los Angeles Unified School District. Most of his students are starting out at a first or second grade reading level.

Five mornings a week, many mothers drop off their children at nearby elementary schools and then take Kevin's English class. His evening class, which meets four nights, is predominantly working-class people, looking to increase literacy skills and job opportunities.

When Kevin's school rolled out an online learning management system and gave students Chromebooks that they could use at school or at home, he wanted to give them an opportunity to do more. His students were going to "bogus" websites to try to learn English. They were finding videos that were translating for people who lived in England or Australia. He was looking for a program that was more direct for ESL students in America.

The programs he found were limited and the students could only do as many questions as he assigned, often with a maximum limit. However, his policy is that his classroom doors are open 24/7. He says, "If the students want to continue increasing their literacy skills, especially if there is a financial incentive in the workplace, they should have the opportunity to do so." He started looking around and talking to colleagues about other literacy programs.

A colleague told him about ReadTheory one day after school and its benefits. He had some students experiment with it and he asked them about their level of satisfaction. The students liked that they were able to do as much reading as they wanted.

Kevin knew ReadTheory would best serve his students, and looked forward to expanding his own skill set in the process. He states, "Just the fact that the students are doing things that they've never done—speaking in a new language—I believe that we as teachers should push ourselves to learn something new and do something more, like using ReadTheory."

“

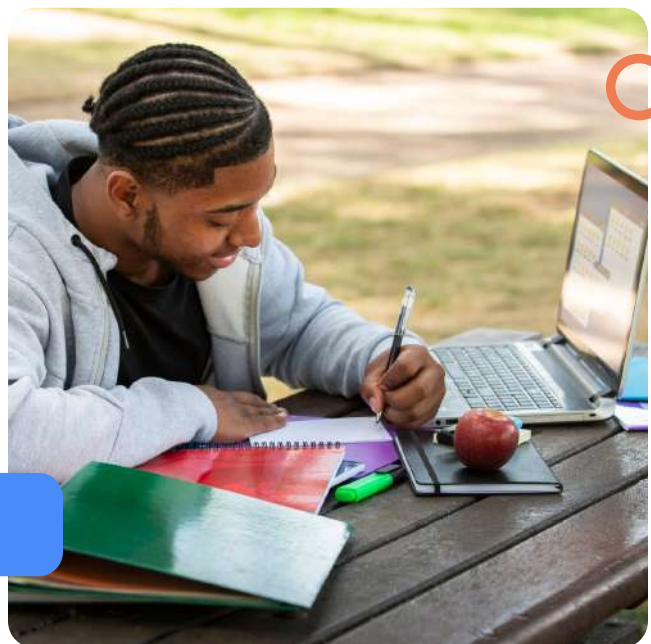
The children are going to see the successes of their parents. When the parents are successful, chances are the children will be successful too. Success breeds success.



The Solution

Kevin started implementing ReadTheory fully during the next school year in 2018. He had all students use the program and required them to complete seven quizzes per week. He now has made the work even more rigorous, requiring them to complete ten quizzes per week, and has seen even more progress.

His students know to log into ReadTheory for the first fifteen to twenty minutes of class. They know how to check their own progress and to check how many quizzes they've completed for the week.



Kevin says, "As teachers, we ask our students to do new things every single day. Our students historically have been denied education or have not succeeded in education. A lot of times for a student to just be able to come to class each day prepared is a success within itself." He feels that teachers owe it to the students to be lifelong learners. By digging into ReadTheory, Kevin says he got better at his craft, especially with data analysis.

He holds the students accountable by giving them brief check-ins. For example, on Monday, he'll show the students how many quizzes they've completed during the first ten minutes of class and encourage them to keep working. Tuesday, he'll dig in more and tell the students exactly how many passages they have left and offer them a plan to get it done. Breaking down the workload makes it less overwhelming for the students. Sometimes reminding the students that they only need to do one a day, for example, gives them enough motivation to reach their goals.

He reminds students that it's more important to keep reading than to worry about scores at this level. He says "I know that I'm making a difference by giving my students an opportunity to continue learning with ReadTheory when the bell rings." He created buttons for the students on his learning management system for easy access to ReadTheory, even on their phones, which he calls "walking computers." Even if the students are waiting in a doctor's office or for a bus, they can read.



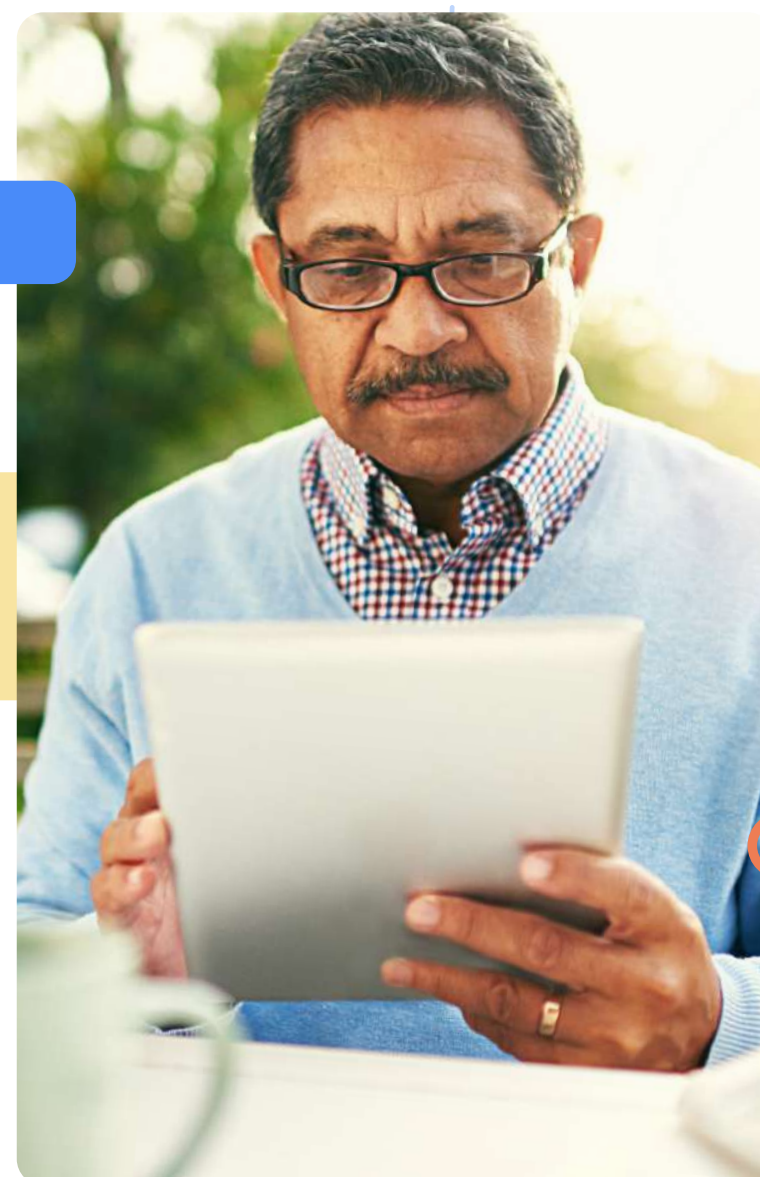
The Impact

Over time, Kevin and his students have seen tremendous growth. Kevin says, "ReadTheory is a great predictor for me, as a teacher, for promotion. The students who are progressing and doing the work are seeing the greatest growth. I'm able to use it as a predictor of who's going to be promoted to the next level at the end of the trimester."

Kevin says his Level 2B class is just a step on the ESL ladder. To measure his own success, he looks at his students' progress going from 3A to 3B in the next levels. This way of thinking helps him to see the impact of laying down a foundation for his students so that they can go to the next levels and move on.

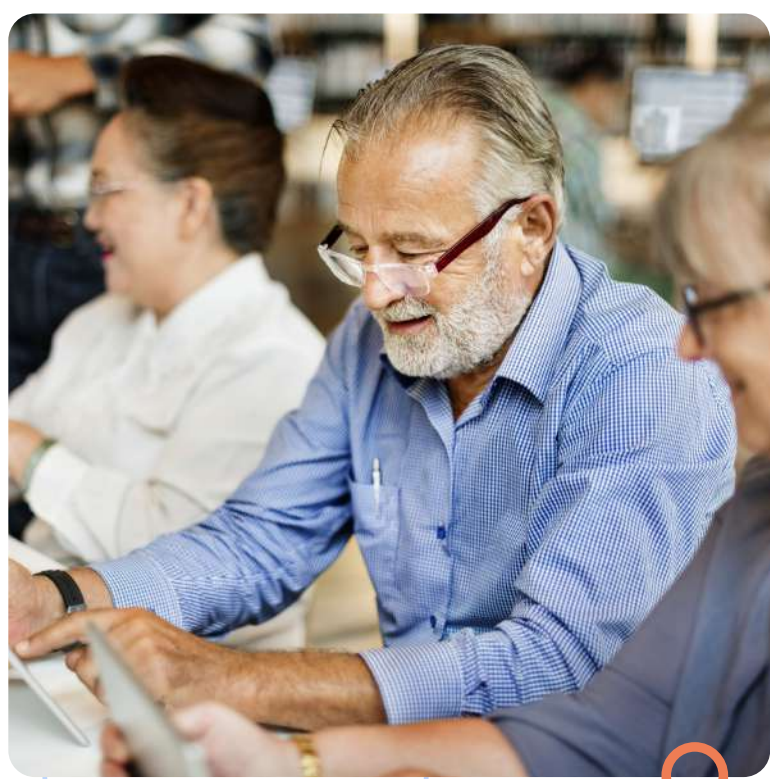
When the working class parents progress from one level to the next or show growth over time, they can even sometimes take certificates to their employers and get pay raises or stipends. The adult students also see ReadTheory badges as extra incentives, which they enjoy.

Kevin had a student who immigrated from El Salvador during the COVID-19 lockdown. She took his Level 2 class virtually, but wasn't doing a lot of reading on ReadTheory. Kevin's final exam involves four parts: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. She didn't pass the promotional test due to a low reading level. For the second trimester, the student used ReadTheory consistently over the winter break and went from a mid-1st grade level to a third grade level. After also completing ten quizzes a week in class, she succeeded. When the student took Kevin's promotional test again, she was the first and only student ever to get 100. Kevin tells his students, "If you want to practice more English, read. Just read." Kevin eventually met the student in person in a Level 4 class, and she was still doing ReadTheory.



One of his current students started at 340 Lexile level. Last summer, she was supposed to attend a class but didn't. However, Kevin was able to check his account and see she completed about 1,000 quizzes on ReadTheory that summer. To date, she has completed 1,665 ReadTheory quizzes in total and is at a 553 Lexile level.

There are instances where Kevin's adult students have recognized that their own children are struggling with reading comprehension and have signed them up for ReadTheory. Kevin says, "In Adult ESL, in particularly marginalized communities where English is not the dominant language, a lot of times when the parent is not proficient in English, they use a different language in the home. The child then has a harder time with English because they aren't speaking it at home." For example, one couple from Venezuela in Kevin's class had a child who was struggling in reading. They asked Kevin how to sign their son up for ReadTheory and Kevin showed them. By the end of the trimester, they saw the improvement of their child and eventually pulled aside other parents in the class and asked how their children were doing, recommending ReadTheory.



Kevin says sometimes the parents say they don't have time to read. He tells them that when their children are doing their homework, the parents should sit down and read on ReadTheory. They will be showing their children that education is important because they are learning too. By encouraging adults and their children to use ReadTheory to increase their literacy skills, Kevin is helping to lift them out of poverty, one family at a time.



Help us write the next chapter!

If you've been using ReadTheory in your class and have a story to tell, we want to hear it!

Share your story! 