Champion of IDEAS

English Language Development Program

Case Study – Rome High School, GA 2018-2019 Academic Year **Summary Report**



About Ballard & Tighe, Publishers

Ballard & Tighe, Publishers was founded in 1976 by two pioneers in the field of English language education, Wanda Ballard and Phyllis Tighe. The dearth of quality language materials motivated these two educators to launch the IDEA Kit, one of the first comprehensive oral language programs for English learners. Today, Ballard & Tighe materials serve Pre-K through grade 12 English learners, focusing on systematic and explicit language instruction while building academic skills students need to succeed in mainstream classes.

At Ballard & Tighe our mission is to help English learners reach their full potential and the way we do that is by creating materials that accelerate their language development and provide data to guide placement and instructional support.

About Champion of IDEAS

Champion of IDEAS is a proficiency-based English Language Development program that drives language instruction through content-area topics, integrating science, math, social studies, language arts, and life and career skills.

Systematic Scope and Sequence

Language forms (grammar) and functions (tasks) are introduced and reinforced through the units. Language objectives are aligned with state English language proficiency standards and supports the Common Core State Standards.

Oral Language Development

Students have extensive opportunities to practice both social and academic language in authentic contexts. This academic language is recycled throughout the program.

Vocabulary and Academic Language

Champion provides explicit vocabulary and academic language instruction with the goal of creating proficient readers who can access mainstream content-area text.

Academic Achievement: Content-Area Topics

The *Champion Reader* covers a broad range of interesting topics including history, literature, communication, mathematics, and science and technology, as well as many different reading and writing genres. At the end of each reading, students answer comprehension questions that assess understanding of the content and promote higher order thinking skills.

Champion Case Study Researcher

Robin Stevens, M.A., has been working in the field of English language assessment and education for 30 years. Robin started teaching K-12 English learners in Taiwan in 1988. Later, she worked at the University of California Los Angeles (CRESST) where she did research on academic English across the content areas and developed integrated skills language assessments for middle school. A former Fulbright scholar to Taiwan, she received her M.A. in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

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Executive Summary

High school students face many challenges as they prepare for readiness to transition from high school to career or college. Critical to success in the United States is English language proficiency. However, thousands of students across the country struggle to meet their English learning and academic goals, which can result in barriers to future success.

In the effort to prepare their high-school English learners for the future, Rome High School in Rome, Georgia participated in a pilot study using Ballard & Tighe's *Champion* English Language Development Program during the 2018-2019 academic year.

The goals of the study were to implement a new content-based English language program to help accelerate student progress in overall and academic English language proficiency, and to strengthen the structure of the school's English curriculum for this subgroup of learners. Student English proficiency data and demographics were collected at the beginning of the study and teachers were provided with training and ongoing support throughout the year.

Champion was used in three creditbearing classes at Rome High School with their English learners. During the study, Ballard & Tighe also collected feedback on teacher and student experiences with Champion at intervals during the year, as well as English proficiency scores at the end of the year. Results indicate that most students made modest gains on two tests of English proficiency.

Additionally, Rome High School successfully established a new framework for implementing rigorous content-based and standards-based lessons on topics relevant to students' academic needs.

Introduction

Across the country, states have implemented English language development and collegeand career-readiness standards to ensure that by high-school graduation, students have gained the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life. However, students who are classified as English learners (ELs) in high school often struggle to meet these goals. Schools must supplement instruction in such a way that ELs not only increase their overall English proficiency for daily and academic life, but also continue to meet subject-area goals. To this end, administrators at Rome High School in Rome, Georgia placed their ELs in classes designed to meet these needs. These credit-bearing English language arts classes provide opportunity for English language practice while at the same time delivering instruction aimed at helping students read and write increasingly complex grade-level-appropriate materials independently and proficiently while interacting orally to complete grade-level academic tasks.

During the 2018-19 academic year, Rome High School district leadership, including the Assistant Superintendent, Director of School Improvement, and ESOL Coordinator, selected a new content-based curriculum called *Champion*. *Champion* is a rigorous English language development program that delivers age-appropriate language instruction grounded in subject-matter content, including English language arts, history, and science. With an emphasis on academic engagement, the program immerses students in interesting, meaningful tasks that contextualize and promote language learning. The program meets academic English learning goals through a focus on skill integration and authentic uses of language for academic purposes, including intense practice of academic vocabulary, language functions, and grammatical forms. Students learn a variety of reading and comprehension strategies that help them unpack complex text. The program also exposes students to extended writing in diverse genres.

Beginning in October 2018, Rome High School's instructional team along with research staff at Ballard & Tighe, Publishers worked collaboratively to tailor the curriculum to school requirements and student needs, as outlined in the course syllabi. Demographic data and student English language proficiency scores were collected at the beginning of the study. Two English language proficiency assessments were used to measure progress: the WIDA ACCESS test and the ELTIS, a Ballard & Tighe test of English reading and listening proficiency for high school students that is administered and scored automatically online. The WIDA ACCESS test was administered in spring 2018 and a second time in February 2019. The ELTIS test was administered in November 2018 and then again in April 2019.

The sections following describe the study questions, the participants, and the results of the study. A discussion of the results and recommendations conclude the report.

Case Study

Study Questions

School staff and researchers at Ballard & Tighe shared similar goals for the study. Primarily, they hoped to answer two research questions:

- 1) Can the new curriculum be successfully implemented to strengthen the school's ELD lessons and course content?
- 2) Do students make progress in English language proficiency using the new curriculum?

To answer the first question, web-based interviews were conducted with the school's ELD teacher and district staff at intervals throughout the year. A final survey was conducted online at the end of the year. The results of the surveys were analyzed qualitatively.

Regarding the second question, student language proficiency data were collected on two different measures of English language proficiency at intervals before, during, and at the end of the academic year. The average scale scores were calculated for each test administration and the number of students whose scores increased, decreased, or remained the same were tabulated.

Methodology

Rome High School in Rome, Georgia participated in the year-long program working collaboratively with Ballard & Tighe to develop and deliver lesson plans and monitor student progress using *Champion*, Red Level (Beginning–Early intermediate level) and *Champion*, Blue Level (Intermediate level). One of the school's English language development (ELD) teachers used the program in three classes, all of which are credit-bearing classes that count toward students' graduation requirements. Therefore, the content of the courses must be of sufficient rigor and quality to support progress not only in terms of English proficiency but also to meet English language arts learning goals and address the Georgia Standards of Excellence.

Champion Shows How English Works



The case study began in October 2018 and ended in May 2019. Although program use began in October, official training was delivered on November 15, 2018 due to scheduling issues. Ballard & Tighe staff delivered a teacher training course virtually to the ELD teacher, the Rome School District ESOL Coordinator/Title III Instructional Coach, and the school's Assistant Principal. Subsequently, there was a change in faculty in November and a follow-up training was conducted to onboard the new ELD teacher, review lesson plans, and follow up on implementation questions.

Two types of data were collected during the start-up period: student demographics and language proficiency data. Demographics included gender, grade, and information on specialized educational programs or needs. Language proficiency data included WIDA ACCESS test scores from spring 2018 and ELTIS English proficiency test scores. The ELTIS English proficiency test is an online test of English reading and listening proficiency for high school students. To avoid over-testing the students, ELTIS was only administered to the two intermediate level classes in November. The high beginner class took the *Champion* Placement Test to assure placement into the correct chapter of the Red Level instead. As a result, the class moved back a chapter in the program.

In December 2018, Ballard & Tighe conducted a web-based interview to collect information about progress in the curriculum and the teacher's classroom experience using the materials. A subsequent web-based follow-up interview was conducted in late February, and students took WIDA ACCESS during the spring administration in February as well. The two intermediate classes also took the second form of ELTiS in April. Finally, an online survey was completed by Rome High School and district leadership staff in May 2019.

Participants

Rome High School is a part of the Rome City Schools school district located in Rome, Georgia. Rome is situated in Floyd County, which is about 70 miles northwest of Atlanta, and has a population of 36,159.¹ The high school is a public school with 1,860 students, 123 of which were classified as English learners (ELs) in the 2018-2019 school year.² All of the students classified as an EL at the school spoke Spanish as a first language, except one Hindi speaker.

Georgia is part of the WIDA Consortium and uses the WIDA English Language Development Standards to guide instruction and assess ELs, so all of the participating students were placed into their classes using the WIDA ACCESS test or the WIDA Screener. In terms of English language arts standards, the state uses the Georgia Standards of Excellence, which are based on the Common Core State Standards.

Three staff participated in the study. The main point of contact was the Rome School District ESOL Coordinator/Title III Instructional Coach, who collaborated on all aspects of the study. She is a highly qualified ELD professional and is fluent in Spanish. She has over 11 years teaching experience at the elementary and secondary levels and four years experience as the district lead ESOL teacher prior to being promoted to her current position this year.

¹ **Source:** accessed https://www.rcs.rome.ga.us/Page/1229 on January 29, 2019.

² Source: email communication from Noel Wilkinson, Rome School District ESOL Coordinator, December 20, 2018.

Case Study

She has a bachelor of arts degree in Spanish and a master of arts in reading, language and literacy, in addition to professional endorsements in reading and instructional coaching.

One teacher participated in the study from November 2018 to May 2019. She is also a highly qualified ELD professional who has been teaching over 18 years. A fluent speaker of English, Brazilian Portuguese, and Spanish, she has taught English as a second language to elementary and middle school students and Spanish and English language arts at the secondary level. She has a bachelor of arts in Portuguese and English literature and a master of arts in secondary education with a concentration in English as a second language.

Finally, we worked in coordination with the school's associate principal, who has been an educator for more than 25 years. She worked as a social studies teacher for 10 years and an administrator for more than 15. She has a bachelor of science in secondary social science education and a masters and specialist degrees in school leadership.

A total of 53 students participated in the study. There were 21 students from grades 9 through 12 in the English ESOL 2 class (high beginners). Eight were female and 13 were male. All of the students speak Spanish as their first language. Their beginning ACCESS test proficiency scores ranged from 1.5 to 3.1. No students in this class were enrolled in an Individualized Educational Program (IEP). One student was classified as a long-term English learner (LTEL), with enrollment gaps in both the U.S. and Mexico.

There were two English ESOL 3 classes (intermediate), which are referred to in this report as classes 3A and 3B. Class 3A had 14 students from grades 9 through 11, of whom five were female and nine were male. Thirteen students speak Spanish as a first language and one student speaks Hindi. Their beginning ACCESS proficiency scores ranged from 1.9 to 4.2. Four students were enrolled in IEPs, and nine students were classified as LTELs, with one of them having spent the last six years in Mexico after leaving the U.S. in fourth grade.

Class 3B had 18 students from grades 9 through 12, of whom five were female and 13 were male. All of the students speak Spanish as a first language. Their beginning ACCESS test proficiency scores ranged from 1.9 to 4. Three students in this class were enrolled in IEPs, and six students were classified as LTELs. Information for all three classes is summarized in Table 1 below.

CLASS	Total No of Ss	Female	Male	Grade Levels	First Language	Beginning ACCESS Proficiency Scores
ESOL 2	21	8	13	9-12	21 Spanish	1.5 to 3.1
ESOL 3A	14	5	9	9-11	13 Spanish 1 Hindi	1.9 to 4.2
ESOL 3B	18	5	13	9-12	18 Spanish	1.9 to 4.0
Summary	53	18	35	9-12	52 Spanish 1 Hindi	1.5 to 4.2

Table 1. Student Demographics

Results

As mentioned above, there were two research questions for this pilot study. Results of the analyses related to the two questions are discussed below.

Implementation of the Champion Program

The first question was: Can the *Champion* curriculum be successfully implemented to strengthen the school's ELD lessons and course content? To answer this question, we collected information via web-based interviews with the school's ELD teacher and staff at intervals throughout the year, and a final survey was conducted online at the end of the year.

Web-based Interviews

The first web-based interview was conducted in December 2018. The guestions were open ended and focused on helping the staff implement the program successfully. The staff at Rome High School reported that they had not used the program much since the training that was conducted in November. The school had unplanned closures that were weather related and also because the school played in a *champion*ship football game. Additionally, the *Champion* placement testing for ESOL 2 and ELTIS for ESOL 3A/3B consumed additional time. That said, the staff reported they were generally very happy with the program and felt that it appropriately challenged students and provided the language instruction that students need. They said the readings were engaging to students and provided essential instruction in grammar and language functions. They also reported positive feedback on the audio recordings of the reading texts, as well as the reading comprehension check features of the program. In particular, the ESOL 3A/3B classes enjoyed a text about the origins of English, which was challenging for students yet interesting and helped build meta-awareness of their own first languages as well. At the time, there was minimal use of external resources to supplement the program, with the exception of some videos from YouTube and Google Classroom. They were in the process of setting up portfolios and the ESOL 3A/3B classes were already engaging in academic discussions related to the program topics.

Though the classes were organized by proficiency level, there was still some variation in ability. To differentiate for higher and lower proficiency levels, the ELD teacher used student pairings to help lower level students, and made use of sentence frames, anchor charts, and graphic organizers to scaffold instruction.

The second web-based interview was conducted at the end of February 2019. The checkin meeting covered a range of topics related to using the *Champion* curriculum, school testing dates and plans, future meetings, and training for next year's implementation of *Champion*.

Overall, the staff at RHS felt the pace of instruction in *Champion* was relatively slow with each of the three classes only finishing one chapter each, in addition to some reteaching lessons from content in other chapters. The slow pace was attributed in part to the short length of the classes (50 minutes), as well as the number of disruptions to the schedule in the form of holidays, weather events, and testing. In addition to the normal winter break, there were two 3-day holidays and an additional snow day after the winter break. Additionally, ACCESS testing was conducted during late January and early February, which takes up substantial instructional time. State subject area testing was scheduled to begin in April and takes a week to complete.

That said, the school liked using the program and felt that students were enjoying it and learning. They reported looking forward to using the program next year, when they be able to implement it at the beginning of the year, have an additional ESOL teacher, and group students in smaller classes. The classes were of mixed ability and bigger than they would have liked during the 2018-19 academic year.

The teacher reported using some lessons and chapters out of sequence, covering topics such as English for geometry and related to animals or life sciences. One difference the teacher reported between the ESOL 2 and ESOL 3A/3B classes is that the ESOL 2 class was in the morning, and the other two classes were in the afternoon. The ESOL 2 class was more energetic and positive in general, perhaps because of the time of day.

Final Online Survey

The final survey was completed in May 2019 after instruction was finished for the year. The survey focused on collecting information about the amount of material covered, which components were used, student engagement, and progress toward district and state goals for their ELs. The ultimate goal for the learners is to exit the ESOL program and become critical thinkers, readers, and writers. They felt the program helps meet those goals because it covers all four skill areas (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), in addition to grammar and activities geared toward development of oral language.

During the six months that the program was fully implemented (December through May), all three classes completed two chapters in full and parts of four other chapters in their respective *Champion* program levels (Red and Blue). All of the *Champion* components were used. In addition, a variety of online educational resources were integrated, including Google Slides for vocabulary images, Readworks, Newsela, Quizizz, Quizlet, and Wizer. The teacher also created anchor charts to explain grammar and vocabulary, and commented that "by the end of the school year, my classroom was "dripping" with print containing everything we covered this year."³

³ Source: Rome High School Final Survey, E. Campbell, ESOL Teacher, May 2019.

Champion Accelerates Language Development

Proficiency Based

Newcomer
Beginner - Advanced
Long-Term ELs

Standards Based

CCSS • WIDA • ELPA21 • CA ELD • Texas ELPS • a variety of state content standards

Content Based

Language through content •Science • ELA • Math • History • Career & Life Skills

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The ESOL teacher further reported that students were engaged and motivated by some of the readings, such as a text about animals. The ESOL district coordinator mentioned that students were particularly engaged by the recorded reading selections and noted that the digital resources were very easy to use and that the emphasis on paper-based readings helped reduce the "digital fatigue" observed in the past with programs that focus on electronic readings and resources rather than print.

Overall, the staff observed greater student participation using *Champion* and improvement in grammar skills and better use of oral language.

Student Language Proficiency

The second research question in this pilot study relates to student language proficiency: Do students make progress in English language proficiency using the new curriculum?

Since the curriculum was only implemented for two months before ACCESS was taken in the spring, any proficiency gains between the two ACCESS test administrations are a result of a combination of factors and not only the *Champion* curriculum. Additionally, it was only four and a half months between the first and second administration of ELTiS, so those gains would also likely be minimal. Nevertheless, an analysis of the data show overall gains on both measures, which demonstrates that RHS's ELs are making progress in their English proficiency.

Due to the small number of students in the sample, simple averages were calculated for the beginning and ending ACCESS scale scores, as well as the range for the test scores. In addition, we tabulated the number of students who increased in overall proficiency, decreased, or stayed the same. The results of these analyses are provided in Table 2 below.

	ESOL 2 (n=17)	ESOL 3A/3B Combined (n=26)	All Students Combined (n=43)
2018 Average Scale Score (Range)	306 (266-344)	349 (312-386)	332 (266-386)
2019 Average Scale Score (Range)	330 (273-388)	370 (334-413)	354 (273-413)
No. of Increased Scores (%)	14 (82%)	23 (88%)	37 (86%)
No. of Unchanged Scores (%)	2 (12%)	0 (0%)	2 (5%)
No. of Decreased Scores (%)	1 (6%)	3 (12%)	4 (9%)

Table 2. Average ACCESS Scale Scores for 2018-2019

... an analysis of the data show overall gains on both measures, which demonstrates that RHS's ELs are making progress in their English proficiency.

The total number of students with complete score reports for both ACCESS test administrations is 43 out of the original 53. Four students in the ESOL 2 class only had scores for the WIDA Screener, which cannot be compared to scores on WIDA ACCESS. For that reason, these students are not included in the ACCESS data analyses, even though their proficiency scores indicated an increase in proficiency. Three students from ESOL 3A and three from ESOL 3B were also not included in the data analyses because there was incomplete test data for ACCESS, ELTIS, or both tests. Two of the students withdrew from class and another was having significant behavioral issues, resulting in an alternate school placement and withdrawal from Rome High School. The remaining four missed parts of the tests. Therefore, they were dropped from the analyses altogether.

In the high beginners class (ESOL 2), the average scale score increased from 306 to 330 between the two administrations. The range of scores went from 266 to 344 during the 2018 administration to 273-388 during the 2019 administration. Fourteen students (82%) increased their scores. Two students' scores remained unchanged and one student's score decreased.

The intermediate classes (ESOL 3A/3B) data were combined for analysis, since they were considered at the same proficiency level for placement into their ESOL classes and were in the same place in the curriculum. Their average scale scores increased from 349 to 370, with 23 students (88%) increasing their scores and three students showing a decrease in their scores. The range of scores increased from 312 to 386 during the 2018 administration to 334-413 during 2019.

When the averages for the three classes are combined, the average scale scores went from 332 to 354, with a range of 266-386 for the 2018 administration and 273-413 during the 2019 administration. Thirty-seven students (86%) increased their scores, while two remained unchanged, and four decreased.

Regarding the ELTiS scores, we calculated the average overall scores for the two test administrations, as well as the average scores for the listening and reading sections of the test. Note, that while ACCESS tests all four modalities (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), the ELTIS assesses just reading and listening. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 3.

Champion Promotes Active Language Interaction



Table 3. Average ELTiS Scale Scores for ESOL Classes 3A/3B (N = 26)

	November Administration	April Administration	Change in Student Scores
Listening	202	204	7 increased 7 decreased 12 no change
Reading	186	188	9 increased 4 decreased 13 no change
Overall Score	194	196	10 increased 5 decreased 11 no change

As with ACCESS, the overall results for the ELTiS are promising. Students showed gains in their average subscores for listening and reading, as well as their overall average scores, though the differences are small. In terms of the change in student scores, there is a great deal of individual variance. In listening, seven students increased their scores, seven showed a decrease, and 12 were unchanged. In reading, nine showed an increase, only four decreased, and 13 were unchanged. Overall, 10 students' scores increased, only five decreased, and 11 students' overall scores remained unchanged.

The school reported high levels of student engagement with the program and also that it provides the rigor and content needed for students not only to make progress on their English skills but also to learn academic content and skills needed across subject areas.



Discussion

The analyses of the qualitative and quantitative data show promising results for the pilot study. Not only was Rome High School successful in implementing the *Champion* program, showing a high level of student engagement and interest in the materials, the school also reported progress in terms of student grammar and oral language skills. These comments are supported by the results of the test data analyses, which show modest gains on both tests of English proficiency with 86% of all students showing an increase in their scale scores on ACCESS. The more varied picture of student gains on the ELTiS may be due in part to the test only covering two skills (listening and reading) and not speaking and writing. Additionally, students took the second administration of the ELTiS in early April, which was soon after the state subject-area testing occurred. Students may have experienced test fatigue, given that the WIDA ACCESS was given in February, the state tests in March, and ELTiS in April. Though ELTiS requires shorter testing time than the other tests, students may also have felt their performance on this test was less important than the others. All of these factors related to testing may have contributed to a small number of students showing a slight decrease in their English proficiency performance.

There were other confounding factors in the study, which included a relatively short period of implementation. The official training on the curriculum did not occur until mid November, even though Rome High School had started using the program. The teacher who started the year with the students was replaced after the curriculum training, and a new training was conducted. The new teacher began using the program in late November after the Thanksgiving holiday.

Finally, there were numerous disruptions in instruction, beginning with the Thanksgiving break, weather-related school closures, winter and spring break, and state testing periods in late January/early February and March. For these reasons, students were tested after a relatively short interval of instruction, which especially would have precluded students from showing progress on ELTIS. Since students had a full year between test periods on ACCESS, it is reasonable that they would have shown progress on that assessment.

Our ultimate goal for English Learners is that they will exit our ESOL program and become critical thinkers, readers, and writers. The *Champion* program covers all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. [*Champion*] will deliver the content needed to help your English Learners to be successful. It seems like *Champion* thought of almost everything that an English Learner will need to be successful. ... the breakdown of each lesson makes planning simpler and less time consuming when writing lesson plans.

E. Campbell, ESOL teacher – Rome High School, GA

Conclusion

The results of the pilot study are promising in terms of how well Rome High School was able to implement the *Champion* program in three classes and also with respect to student progress. Though student progress cannot be entirely attributed to the use of the *Champion* program, it was undoubtedly a contributing factor. The school reported high levels of student engagement with the program and also that it provides the rigor and content needed for students not only to make progress on their English skills but also to learn academic content and skills needed across subject areas.

There were several complications at the beginning of the year, which led to a delayed start in using the program. The late start, change in teachers, and delayed training all shortened the window of instruction using *Champion*. To ensure success in the next academic year, it is recommended that students be given the *Champion* Placement Test immediately after school starts to determine where to start in the program. Students should also take an additional measure of English proficiency no later than October and then repeat the measure using a different test form at least six months later. This will ensure a longer period of instruction, which will increase the probability that students will show stronger progress as a result of instruction and use of the *Champion* program. With a full academic year in the program and the highquality instruction the school delivers, we expect students will make excellent progress toward meeting school and state learning goals.





Students

monitor learning. practice online. interact with content.

- · Self-checks to monitor learning
- Interactive content and practice
- Annotated tools to support reading comprehension
- · Scaffolds to support learning

Teachers assignments. track progress. 00:11:42



generate reports.

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Student V	State	Scow	Checks	Ems	Mistakes	104		
David Wilkinson	Submitted 🚯	100 %	0	0	0	00.21.28	0	
Derec Carter	Submitted 🚺	28 %	3	0	3	00.01.01	0	
Erc Lewis	Submitted 🚺	63.%	11	22	35	00.04.13	0	
Jerry Foster	Submitted 🚯	74%	18	15	83	00.25.05	0	t
Jeska Powell	Submitted 🚺	84.5	16	6	19	00.22.05	0	
Kate Wely	Submitted 🚺	85 %	11	6	38	00 11 24	0	
Meg Wood	Submitted 🚺	100 %	77	0	279	00.24.19	0	
Tim Othe	Submitted ()	83 %	23	8	122	00.09.12	10	

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