



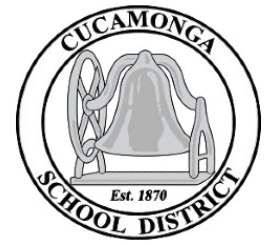
institute for
multi-sensory
education



CASE STUDY

Cucamonga Local School District Cucamonga, California

Cucamonga School District (CSD) is located in Southern California in the western region of San Bernardino County in the Cities of Rancho Cucamonga and Ontario. CSD is one of four K-8 elementary school districts in the city. The district has three elementary schools (K-5) and one middle school (6-8), serving a diverse population of approximately 2443 students. Throughout the district, 69.5% of students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 67% qualify for free and reduced lunch, 13.3% are English Learners, and 11.7% are students with disabilities. Cucamonga provides a comprehensive education that promotes academic, emotional, and social development, which enables students to be lifelong learners and realize their full potential.

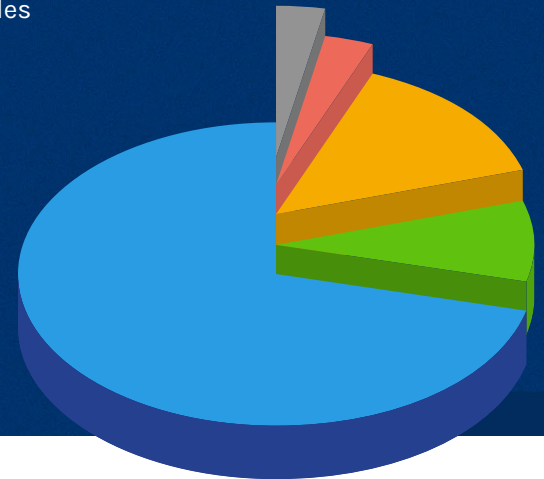


2,400+ STUDENTS

150 EDUCATORS

4 SCHOOLS

Cucamonga School District Demographics



CHALLENGE

In an effort to boost literacy scores, Cucamonga provided learning center environments to engage kids and get them excited about reading, but they weren't seeing reading scores rising. Teachers had nothing to help their dyslexic students, and many felt they didn't have the tools they needed in their toolbox to help all kids read.

“Kids were living in intervention, and progress was stagnant. Kids went to special ed and they stayed there. We struggled with finding something that would make that big change for our kids. There was a hodgepodge of strategies and processes across teachers and classrooms and a lack of consistency for the kids as they moved up in grade level.”

Lisa Baltierra
Literacy Coach & IMSE District Instructor

Mike Chaix, Superintendent at Cucamonga, said, “We were still on an old adoption method from the Common Core days and had major literacy gaps. The gaps kept getting wider and wider in both reading and math, and as a district, we decided that intervention specialists were a big need. We have many kids who come into our district without a lot of literacy; about 15% are English language learners, and the language is difficult to understand. If by third grade these kids can’t read, they cannot read to learn going forward.”

SOLUTION

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Cucamonga witnessed firsthand a nearby district whose teachers used IMSE’s Orton Gillingham approach.

“The implementation of IMSE OG has significantly bolstered the confidence and proficiency of our EL students in reading and language skills, as evidenced by notable improvements in benchmark data. The systematic and multisensory nature of OG has proven to be instrumental in addressing the diverse learning needs of our students, fostering a positive learning environment, and ultimately contributing to their success in acquiring English language proficiency.”

Lisa Baltierra

Literacy Coach & IMSE District Instructor

“We were blown away by what they were doing in their special ed and gen ed classrooms,” said Lisa. “Our

superintendent, equally impressed, encouraged me to go through IMSE’s training.”

After COVID hit, the district was ready to make changes and hired a literacy coach. By the end of 2021, Baltierra finished IMSE’s training in the Orton-Gillingham approach, completed her practicum, and became the District Instructor starting in the 2022-2023 school year. IMSE District Instructors are passionate educators who are excited to bring IMSE’s Orton-Gillingham training to the district’s educators. Not only do they provide instruction, but they also offer support and guidance and build sustainability and capacity to ensure district implementation success.

Cucamonga trained 99% of its K-3 teachers – approximately 90-100 educators, sending them to be trained in groups of 10 to help provide more targeted instruction and limit the need for substitute teachers while the teachers went through the professional development training. All K-3 teachers completed one of IMSE’s 30-hour training sessions as of April 2023. The district also just conducted a training with 64 participants between three neighboring districts at the end of July 2023, right before the start of the 2023-2024 school year.

Cucamonga K-3 teachers are now using IMSE’s OG approach for Tier 1, 2, and 3 instruction. District trainer Lisa Baltierra has been praised as the real catalyst for change.

Added Chaix, “Trust and psychological safety in groups are the two major factors that have led to our

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“The ability for Lisa to coach and support our teachers beyond the initial training has been the real game changer. Our teachers need support that goes beyond the 5-day training. Lisa, plus IMSE, is the perfect mix. We want to thank Lisa for that leadership.”

Gil Diaz

Assistant Superintendent at Cucamonga



success. Our teachers feel safe asking Lisa questions, letting their guards down, and having authentic conversations.”

Said Baltierra, “A middle school teacher came up to me and admitted she was so scared about changing her instruction that she hadn’t even opened her bag of IMSE materials. I was able to support her and walk her through it. That bag may have stayed in her closet if not for that hand-in-hand collaboration. It’s so rewarding to support our teachers as they go through these transitions.”

“District trainers, like coaches, can sometimes get a bad reputation as micromanagers, but Lisa helps to break down those barriers because the trust is there between her and the teachers. That’s how we grow - by helping each other because we all have our challenges,” said Chaix.

Said Baltierra, “We never tell our teachers they HAVE to choose a specific type of professional development, but 50 teachers at the beginning of the year chose to take IMSE’s OG course, and we even had some K-5 and 6-8 interventionists take the training as well. We are seeing so many teachers interested in going through the training; there is truly excitement.”

RESULTS

According to the DIBELS Benchmark Goals, Cucamonga exhibited significant progress even with some teachers still in the early stages of their 30-hour training program. These teachers were

able to immediately apply IMSE’s Orton-Gillingham strategies in their classrooms, resulting in positive outcomes for their students.

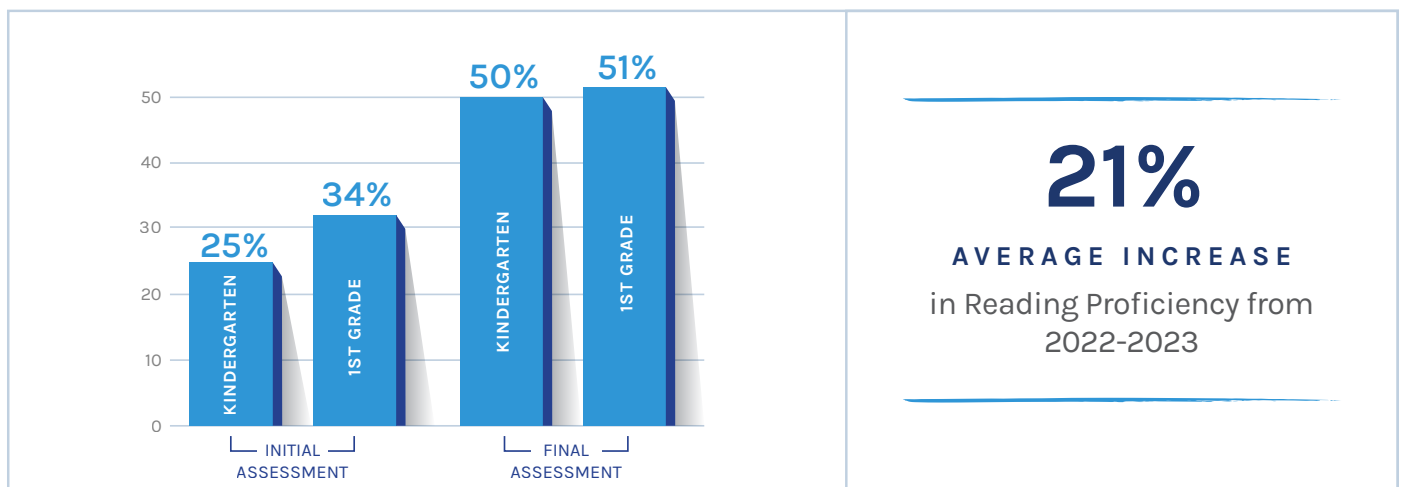
The composite scores by grade level showed students made tremendous growth from the 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 school year:

- K – From 25% reading at or above grade level to 50%
- 1st Grade – From 34% reading at or above grade level to 51%
- 2nd Grade – Not all teachers were trained before the data was collected, but growth still went from 41% reading at or above grade level to 52%
- 3rd Grade – Went slightly down from 44% reading at or above grade level the year prior. These teachers were not yet trained last year, but in summer 2023, third grade teachers completed IMSE’s training. Cucamonga expects to see these numbers change drastically this year.

“Every kid deserves to learn to read. We have been on this journey for a year; our teachers and students are excited to learn. The benefits are transferring to all different content areas because kids are learning to read. Teachers are jumping in and implementing so fast - these kinds of changes can typically take years!”

Lisa Baltierra
Literacy Coach & IMSE District Instructor

Districtwide K and 1st-Grade Reading Proficiency ‘22-’23



Chaix shared, “I will even speak for the board. This year, we have two brand new board members. They walked through the classrooms, noticed OG instruction, and said, ‘This is good, how do we do more of this?’ That never happens! Even untrained folks from the community are noticing major changes and value in our district. The excitement is just infectious.”

Now that Cucamonga has trained all of its K-3 teachers, the district is ready to hit the ground running.

“We are excited about what we will see in the CA state testing, which starts in third grade. We know it will take time to see a ripple effect because teachers were trained so recently. We will likely start to see a larger impact in our [CAASPP](#) scores starting in 2024,” said Diaz.

Starting with the 2023-2024 school year, the district will implement all of the IMSE OG assessments for K-3, and the teachers are actually looking forward to conducting them.

Adds Diaz, “It’s crazy, who gets excited about assessment?!”

Like many districts, Cucamonga still has a handful of middle school students struggling with literacy, and many middle school teachers don’t know how to teach reading. Some of the middle school teachers in the district signed up for IMSE OG training this summer, and there has been a strong focus on helping reach sixth-grade students.

“We have certain middle school students who are struggling; we have intervention specialists who have been trying to figure out how to best support these kids for years. Shifting the mindset to discussing early literacy skills in fifth, sixth,

and seventh-grade students has been transformative. These teachers are excited to see growth in students who were reading at a first, second, or third-grade reading level before. It’s a huge testament to IMSE’s impact,” said Diaz.

“We have interventionists that signed up for OG training this summer, and even the ELA team is asking how to incorporate the concepts into their teaching. Our interventionists are trying to figure out how to meet all students where they are. The changes have been transformative. As we are talking to teachers, even in a short time, they see kids become more confident. They are starting to solve the puzzle of how to read; they are figuring out what to do and feel less lost,” said Chaix.

“Our fifth-grade teachers are chomping at the bit to get the next layer of IMSE training, Morphology Plus for them, and Phonological Awareness for our lower grades,” said Diaz. “Lisa’s ability to coach beyond the initial training and our teachers knowing that at any moment they can call Lisa with a question has provided tremendous support and leadership for our district.”

“We want to minimize the number of kids that need intervention. We’ll always need it, but we want to minimize the number of students that need to get to tier 2. Our goal is to improve literacy for all kids, K-8, and help all kids read by grade 3. We are building the foundation, so it will take some time, but with three grade levels fully trained, I’m confident we will get there.”

Mike Chaix

Superintendent at Cucamonga



ABOUT IMSE

IMSE is an education pioneer and the leading provider of Structured Literacy solutions based on the Science of Reading that incorporates the Orton-Gillingham methodology and all five pillars of literacy to empower teachers from day one.

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Contact info@imse.com to learn more about our work with school districts around the country.