

Diverse district seeing powerful growth with strong leadership, focus and fidelity

Seguin ISD making literacy gains from utilizing Istation as part of strategic plan

Seguin ISD was facing a lot of challenges when Dr. Matthew Gutierrez first arrived as superintendent in 2017. A suburban district located outside San Antonio, Texas, Seguin serves 7,300 students, of which 70 percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch and 75 percent are minorities.

Achievement gaps had been widening and Seguin students had been falling behind academically over the previous ten years. Leadership turnover was also significant, as there had been 11 or 12 different assistant superintendents of curriculum and instruction during the same period. "There was a lot of disruption and a lack of cohesion and focus across the district," Gutierrez says.

Creating a data-driven strategic plan

Almost immediately after starting on the job, Gutierrez prioritized the creation of a new strategic plan for the district. "Prior to my arrival, there was no strategic plan, and there had not been one as far back as anyone could remember," Gutierrez says.

One of the areas Gutierrez and Seguin administrators examined was how their schools were using Istation, particularly as a universal screening assessment in literacy. While Istation's

research-based, blended learning intervention and instruction had been adopted years prior, Gutierrez says it wasn't being used with fidelity and consistency around the district. "Some schools used it extensively, some very little or not at all."

But Gutierrez recognized an opportunity to maximize Istation's accurate, on-demand assessment data to help educators differentiate instruction. By using Istation more consistently, the district could create a data-driven culture across campuses that would help support more insightful, targeted instructional decisions. Plus, because Istation is built on the science of reading, educators had the ability to press into specific skill areas where students struggled and prescribe targeted interventions in vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and more to get them on track for reading growth.

Ensuring fidelity, building trust

Seguin administrators developed a three-year strategic plan for the district. Gutierrez says the key objectives in the first year of the plan included improving professional development, establishing professional learning communities, and ensuring consistency when it came to using Istation. "We developed structures and systems to support using Istation as a universal screener consistently across the district," he says.

Seguin provided training for teachers and principals to help them understand how to use Istation effectively, and highlighted success stories in the district from teachers and classrooms who have used the platform and seen results. Gutierrez says these efforts were crucial to earning and building trust of teachers and principals, both in Istation and in the district's leadership and vision.



Making progress

Today, Seguin is in year three of the strategic plan, and Istation is now being used consistently in all schools. "We've found it to be a very accurate indicator of how students are going to perform on our state assessment in reading for grades 3-8," says Gutierrez. "We use it to monitor student reading progress and to determine which interventions to implement, and also to identify enrichment opportunities for high-achieving students."

Gutierrez says that Istation has also helped Seguin parents get more involved in monitoring each student's reading progress, which became even more beneficial during COVID-19 school closures. The Seguin Board of Trustees recently set a goal of having all students reading at grade level by 3rd grade, with Istation as a key component of the strategy.

"We are finally seeing significant academic growth in the area of literacy, and that can be attributed to establishing consistent use of Istation across our district," Gutierrez says. "I'm proud of the gains we've made and how far we've come, and we are looking forward to even more progress in the future."



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