

How to pilot with success, drive teacher buy-in and support student achievement from the start

Istation gets the green light in San José after strict evaluation process

Never underestimate the power of a good pilot. That's how San José USD achieved teacher buy-in and smooth implementation of Istation programming and formative assessments in Silicon Valley's largest and most diverse school system.

After experiencing many positive results during various pilots, the California district had to adopt Istation Español and assessments—called Istation Indicators of Progress (ISIP™)—for grades TK-2 and ISIP for Reading in K-2. The success of yet another effective pilot led the district to agree to implementing ISIP Español and Reading for grades 3 through 5 at a later date. In addition to assessments, which provide real-time data and frequent progress monitoring, Istation offers research-based, computer-adaptive curriculum and teacher resources for measuring growth and differentiating instruction.

The district of over 30,000 students, 22% of whom are ELLs, selected each product after a rigorous examination.

"We have a very strict piloting process," says Rachel Powell, director of curriculum, instruction and EL services for preK-5. "If we go through the process properly and can tell teachers that their colleagues chose the program we are going to implement, there is less pushback. When we decide to pilot, we don't just say 'Go use it and tell us if you liked it.' We explain how we made our decision and why we think the program will benefit students and teachers. Teachers know we've done the work."

Cooperative procedure

To participate in a districtwide pilot,



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teachers volunteer and are selected based on grade and language of instruction. Pilot participants meet regularly to share feedback, discuss concerns and receive PD, then make anonymous recommendations to Powell's department.

"It's a great forum for sharing," Powell says of pilot check-ins. "We work through challenges together and get buy-in along the way."

Authentic Spanish is key

Istation Español distinguished itself from competitors right out of the gate.

"Quality drove us to Istation," Powell says. "We have a very diverse district, and we want culturally appropriate programs that support equity. Everything must be available in Spanish. Many companies do the Spanish component as direct translation, but Istation has authentic Spanish. We also get great data and reports."

Virtual PD in unprecedented era

To encourage teachers to use Istation properly, Powell's staff provides training that has been tailored with Istation's help. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Istation provided live virtual coaching sessions and on-demand training webinars to help educators make the transition to remote teaching.

"Everyone at Istation has been really attuned to our requests and needs," Powell says. "We can be difficult to work with because we are picky, but that's why we chose Istation."



Istation