



Learning Upgrade Helps Majority of Baker Elementary ELLs Achieve Reclassification

Results show students achieve significant gains in learning English after completing the digital ELA curriculum

Baker Elementary School is a 100% Title I school with 67% of students identified as English learners. At Baker, 83% of students are predominately Spanish-speaking, and 43% of them don't speak English at home.

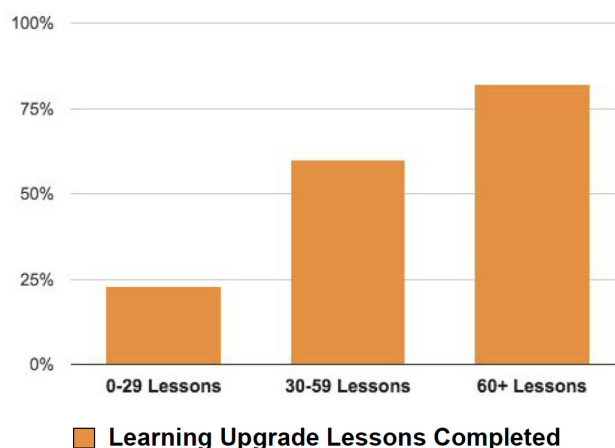


With the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, states now have standardized criteria for designating students as English Language Learners (ELLs) and a process for reclassifying them as “no longer needing extra language instruction.” Led by Principal Dr. Kathleen Gallagher, Baker has an “all hands on deck” approach to helping students achieve English language proficiency.

The school administers the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) each fall to track students' growth in English. The test classifies students into five different language ability levels, from beginner to advanced. Students need to achieve level 4 (early advanced) or 5 (advanced) to meet the state's criteria for reclassification. Students reclassified in less than five years avoid becoming at-risk English learners (ARELs) or long-term English learners (LTELs). Baker's staff is committed to helping every student get reclassified and gain proficiency during elementary school.

Data collected during 2014 and 2015 shows a clear correlation between increased use of Learning Upgrade, an engaging and colorful digital ELA and math curriculum, and increased English-language mastery. While motivation also plays a clear role, data shows that Baker Elementary students who completed a greater number of lessons on the program achieved higher gains on the CELDT test.

% of CELDT Level 3 Students Achieving Level 4 or 5



82% of level 3 (intermediate) students who completed 60+ Learning Upgrade lessons moved to level 4 (early advanced) or 5 (advanced) within one year.

Differentiated Learning for All

Learning Upgrade provides differentiated instruction through content enlivened by songs, videos, and games. The curriculum gives students immediate feedback and allows them to practice until they grasp each concept. Fully aligned with the state curriculum standards, Learning Upgrade lessons are intertwined with what students are already learning in the classroom, allowing them to make “big picture” connections throughout their educational journey.



Teachers at Baker integrate Learning Upgrade into individual work time in place of worksheets. The program saves teachers time in planning specialized curriculum while providing personalized instruction to match each student's individual needs. Learning Upgrade is also a centerpiece of Baker's intervention and RTI strategies, and is used during afterschool programs. The staff works hard to keep computer labs open after school specifically to give students who don't have computers at home access to Learning Upgrade.

After implementing Learning Upgrade, students at Baker experienced above average growth towards reclassification, with 66% of ELLs experiencing at least one level of growth according to the CELDT. The district average is 57%.

"Students who put in the time and effort on Learning Upgrade are improving rapidly," said Raul Mora, Baker's EL coordinator and a 20-year teaching veteran. "We can tell the difference between those who put in the hours and those who don't. There's a clear correlation between accelerated student success and the use of Learning Upgrade."

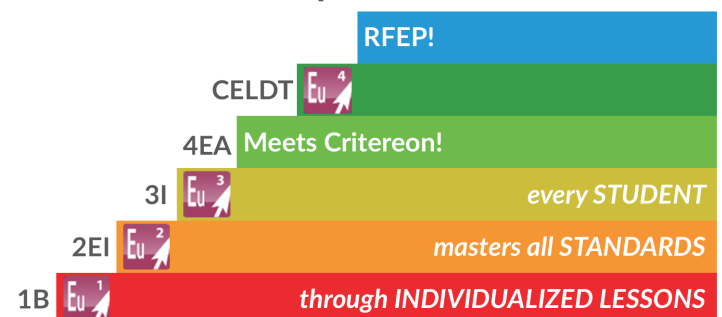
Baker's solid ELL intervention model has seen more than 30% of its English learner students get reclassified each year, compared to the district average of 26%.

The Reclassification Vision

It is Baker's vision and mission to reclassify each ELL before they reach the end of their 5th-grade year so they are confident enough in their English to remain actively engaged in learning through middle school, high school, college, and beyond. As is the case with many schools across the country, Baker's large and increasing population of ELLs makes this mission that much more of a priority.

According to Dr. Gallagher, "If we take the time to develop students' English in elementary school, language challenges that interfere with academic learning are less likely to arise. This dramatically decreases the chance of students dropping out by creating many more pathways to school success."

The CELDT Steps to Reclassification





Raul Mora, Baker’s EL coordinator, hosts an ELL “breakfast club” each morning before school. This creates a natural setting where he can work with students to develop their English in casual conversations.

Baker’s approach to reclassifying ELLs starts with individualized learning plans for all 250-plus ELL students. Using CELDT scores as a baseline, the school determines which students are moving forward on schedule, and identifies those who are ARELs and/or in danger of becoming LTELs. The school calls together all stakeholders to determine a plan of action that includes what additional resources and interventions are best to help these students find success.

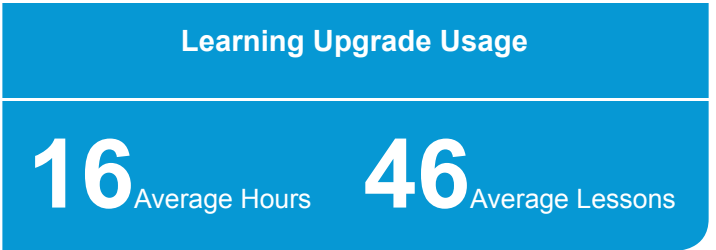
Preventing Students from Being Classified as LTELs
“I once did an experiment where I followed a group of ELLs for an entire school day in an attempt to understand the obstacles getting in the way of learning English,” said Dr. Gallagher. “All of the students were well-behaved, responsible when working independently, committed to getting good grades—but surprisingly, were never required to speak a single word in class.”

She continued, “All too often, traditional views of what a classroom should look like create scenarios where ELLs aren’t

getting enough practice speaking the language in academic contexts. This causes them to disengage from learning, inhibits motivation to learn, and potentially be classified as LTELs.”

Many students who are classified as LTELs often struggle to get past level 3 (intermediate) on the CELDT, and thus cannot achieve reclassification. Baker’s data shows that only 25% of level 3 students completing 0-29 lessons on Learning Upgrade achieved levels 4 or 5 on CELDT, while 82% of students completing 60+ lessons achieved levels 4 or 5. Baker Elementary credits Learning Upgrade as a contributing factor in helping students get through the “silent” period of learning the language and onto a path toward reclassification.

Data shows level 3 students who moved on to levels 4 and 5 spent an average of 16 hours on Learning Upgrade and completed an average of 46 lessons.



Using Learning Upgrade as Digital Intervention
Learning Upgrade is often the first resource Baker offers as an intervention. It’s familiar to the students, it saves teachers time, and parents can play an active role by learning alongside their children and encouraging them to complete each level.

By watching students work through each lesson, a teacher or parent gains insight on where understanding is breaking down and can provide immediate, targeted assistance. The differentiated nature of Learning Upgrade’s curriculum allows schools to adjust the difficulty to ensure that students are learning at an appropriate level and pace. Learning Upgrade’s data reports provide a broad overview of the time a student has spent on the program, the number of lessons completed, and a comprehensive view of each student’s individual mastery of standards.





“When using Learning Upgrade, students can listen to words and repeat them to ensure they are practicing speaking English as opposed to just writing and reading. With ELLs, it’s very important for them to see the word and make visual connections to their native language.”

—Raul Mora
Baker Elementary EL coordinator

As an ELL himself, Mora is invested in helping ELLs succeed and has what he calls a “sense of pride to move the kids forward.” He often serves as the parent liaison who keeps an open line of communication with families of ELLs. “These families do whatever they can to help their child learn English and ensure students have the absolute best possibility for success,” he said.

Community Commitment to ELLs

Pizza parties and free tablets are just two of the incentives the school offers to students who complete all of their lessons in Learning Upgrade. For the past two years, the school has hosted an exclusive pizza party for all students who achieved mastery in the program. The Learning Upgrade team graciously accepted an invitation to the party to hear personal stories of student success.

Baker Elementary Data Breakdown

Baker Elementary is a Title 1 school in the San Diego Unified School District, the second largest district in California.

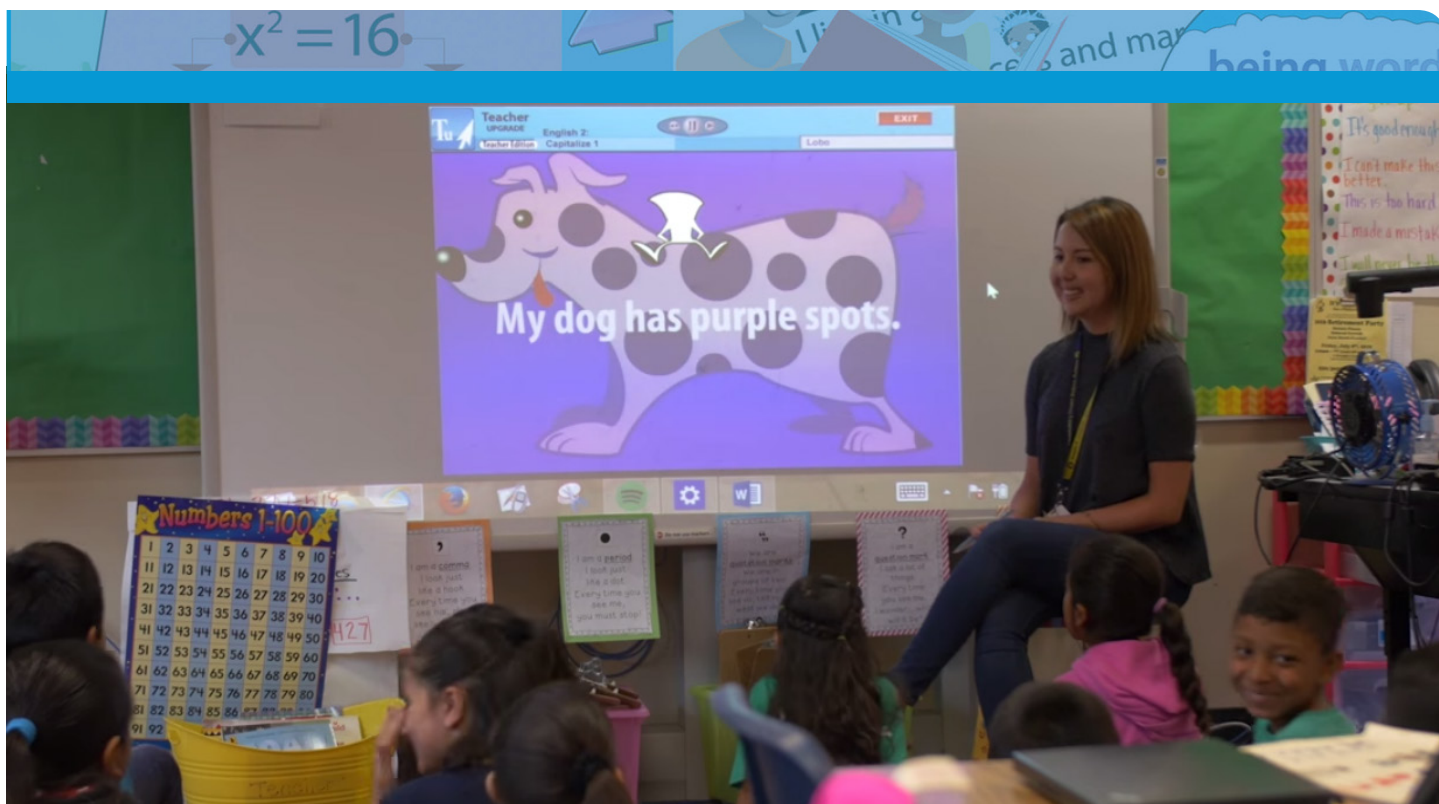
Baker Elementary adopted Learning Upgrade during the 2014–2015 school year.

San Diego Unified School district has 130,000+ students representing more than 15 ethnic groups speaking more than 60 languages and dialects.

This year, posters with the “Baker Bobcat” promoted the Learning Upgrade contest and encouraged students to complete the lessons. The school gave away tablets to five lucky students who had all of their lessons complete before the end of the school year. Dr. Gallagher said, “Offering big prizes like tablets is a much larger investment for our school, but they go a long way to excite and motivate our students.”

The Learning Upgrade implementation team has done numerous parent presentations during Family Fridays, a monthly event where parents are invited to the school to gain a deeper understanding of what their child is learning. “We





use Learning Upgrade to inform parents on things like grade-level expectations, and to help parents obtain a stronger understanding of where their child is in their learning and how they are progressing,” said Dr. Gallagher. Demonstrations of the curriculum show parents how easy it is to use and how they can monitor and support their child’s progress in the program.

“Learning Upgrade’s commitment to our school, mission, and our students has been a one-of-a-kind experience and is one of the many reasons we love using Learning Upgrade.”

—Dr. Kathleen Gallagher
Baker Elementary Principal

Family Fridays are also an opportunity for students to showcase their success. Dr. Gallagher said, “We had two second graders, both of which finished all their lessons on Learning Upgrade in record time. We invited these students and their parents to share their inspiring stories of success with others to inspire families that they too can use the curriculum to help their children.”

ELL students at Baker have seen significant improvements after talking and singing along with Learning Upgrade. Colorful pictures and animations make it easy to keep students engaged, which is rare for students who would prefer to be silent while in school.

“If we all keep pushing toward the same goal of reclassification, each of our children will be better prepared in society,” said Mora. With the power of Learning Upgrade, students, the ELL team, and the entire Baker Elementary community are on the same page and have the same mission: to encourage ELL students to attain English proficiency.

Baker Elementary is hopeful that Learning Upgrade will help them achieve the academic learning goals they have set for their students. While nothing takes the place of a teacher providing targeted language instruction to small groups of students, the engaging curriculum has become an integrated part of the culture at Baker, and all students are beginning to view it as a critical component of their learning. Baker takes pride in helping students take ownership of their learning so they realize the important part they each play in achieving academic proficiency.