

Clovis North High School

- Clovis Unified School District
- Fresno, CA
- Opened 2007
- Grades: 9 - 12
- 2,343 students



Clovis North High School students' CAASPP listening scores increased by 26 percentage points over three years, 15 percentage points higher than the district average.

Innovating to Meet New Standards

Clovis North High School is a sprawling 9-12 campus that sits on the edge of Fresno California. Clovis is a suburban community outside the city of Fresno where the housing developments meet the open plains and farmlands. A relatively new school that is 10 years young, Clovis North prides itself on its collaborative culture and its commitment to cutting edge curricular and instructional innovation.

Like most schools in California, Clovis North is implementing the Common Core standards and has already been through more than one cycle of state testing. They are adjusting to the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium state test also known as CAASPP.

Improving CAASPP Listening Scores

In 2015 Clovis piloted the new CAASPP test and saw alarmingly low scores in listening. In fact, listening scores were the lowest

of all the ELA strands, lower than their results in reading, writing and research. Benton Lewis, a 19-year veteran English teacher, raised the red flag and told his administrators "we need to find a way to incorporate some sort of listening skills with our students to try and increase these scores."

He found Listenwise, a curated collection of public radio stories that are aligned to curriculum in ELA, Social Studies and Science. After using Listenwise with his 11th grade English class consistently, they were tested on listening again in 2016 on the CAASPP. "Their scores jumped up by 11 percentage points from 2015 to 2016. I think just logically speaking, at least part of that is due to Listenwise," says Lewis.

In the 2016-2017 school year his class scores on the listening strand increased again. This time by 15 percentage points. Since Clovis North first implemented Listenwise, students' listening scores - as measured by the number of students

scoring above standard in listening on the CAASPP - have increased by 26 percentage points.

Lewis attributes the improvement in part to the fact that the listening experience and audio content on Listenwise is similar to the CAASPP. He says giving students realistic exposure that is similar to the high stakes tests has made his job “ten times easier and that’s why I love using [Listenwise]”. Repeated exposure to authentic listening activities improves student listening skills.

Integrating ELA and Social Studies

Like many teachers facing changing standards, it’s not practical to simply add-on listening exercises to what he was already doing because he was pressed for time to cover the curriculum during the school year. Lewis needed to integrate listening into his curriculum, and Listenwise allowed him to do that.

In fact, Clovis North has a cross-curricular, collaborative approach to content area instruction, particularly between ELA and social studies teachers. Lewis already had students studying the historical contexts of literature in the curriculum, and here he found a natural fit with non-fiction content from Listenwise. He paired novels or anchor texts that his class was reading with non-fiction audio stories. It gave him a way to both work on listening skills and address multi-modal standards of Common Core. For example, he paired their reading of *The Crucible* with audio from Listenwise about McCarthyism and of the Salem Witch trials.

Using the Declaration of Independence as an anchor text with a Listenwise story about Jefferson as a slave owner, generated rich student discussion about the paradoxes of the Founding Fathers—how one could fight for individual rights from an oppressive government while also owning slaves. Lewis also

discovered that his English Learners were able to comprehend more complex content and participate more readily when working with listening content. Research shows that students can comprehend texts 2 to 3 grade levels higher while listening.

Implementing Listenwise

Lewis was excited to learn Listenwise has created a unique listening comprehension quiz, a multiple choice formative assessment. It makes using and tracking the progress of his 160 students even easier. The listening assessments allow him to look at student strengths and weaknesses across core elements of listening comprehension. “Being able to look at the strands and who did well and who didn’t, allows us to reteach... so we can do more focused teaching on those with lessons at a later point.”

Lewis believes that the path towards improving listening scores the most is to expand Listenwise usage from ELA teachers into Science and Social Studies and continue practicing listening skills multiple times a week at Clovis North.

Highest Listening Scores District-wide

Three years after implementation, Clovis Unified School District leaders have reviewed listening data across all eight secondary schools in the district. Student listening growth increased on average 11 percentage points from 2015-2017.

Clovis North High School students increased by 26 percentage points over that same period, an increase of 15 percentage points higher than their district average. With the best listening scores in the district, Clovis North is the only school in Clovis Unified District that has implemented Listenwise Premium.