

Clovis North Educational Center

- Located: Fresno, CA
- Opened 2007
- Grades: 7 - 12
- 3,400 students
- Comprehensive middle and high school



Innovating to Meet New Standards

Clovis North Educational Center is a sprawling 7-12 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 farm lands. 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 or CAASPP as it's called in California.

Improving 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 a number of times, they were tested on listening again in 2016 on the SBAC. "Their scores jumped up by 12 percentage points from 2015 to 2016. I think just logically speaking, at least part of that is due to Listenwise," says Lewis.

Lewis attributes the improvement in part to the fact that the listening experience and audio content on Listenwise is similar to the SBAC test. 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]".



Integrating ELA and Social Studies

Like many teachers facing changing standards, it's not practical to simply add-on 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 new 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 at Clovis North. With students practicing listening skills multiple times a week within their content lessons, the listening scores on SBAC testing will continue to increase.



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