

Closing the Learning Gap at Newport News Public Schools

LANGUAGE! Live at work at An Achievable Dream, Inc.

THE CHALLENGE

Fighting an Uphill Battle

Before An Achievable Dream's middle schools began implementing Voyager Sopris Learning's **LANGUAGE! Live** program three years ago, significant deficiencies in school readiness or language arts skills were common, particularly among younger students. A majority of students in An Achievable Dream's districts are minority students. Nearly 97 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The high poverty rates in the district meant elementary school students already were lagging academically by the time they arrived. District officials needed an impactful way to improve overall school readiness and foundational language arts skills.

What is An Achievable Dream, Inc.?

An Achievable[®] Dream, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit K–12 program that operates schools within Newport News Public Schools (NNPS) and Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) with plans for further growth at other districts.



“Every year that I use this program, I see tremendous growth in each and every student. Their self-esteem and confidence regarding reading simply goes through the roof.”

—Cassie Prater, teacher
Newport News Public Schools

THE SOLUTION *LANGUAGE! Live*

Theresa McKee, with Voyager Sopris Learning®, approached An Achievable Dream's school administrators with information about an interactive, blended-learning curriculum, **LANGUAGE! Live**, which she believed could help improve the way students learned, and boost overall success. McKee met with administrators to outline why the school would be an ideal fit. At that time, Achievable

Dream administrator **Dr. Amy Runge** was looking for a true partner, a vendor prepared to collaborate with the school to get the program implemented successfully. "That first year naturally involved a learning curve as we got teachers trained, students entered into the

system, and staff members committed," Runge said. "The greatest and most telling piece of this program, for us, was that the teacher who was implementing it loved it, saw instant results in her struggling students, and begged us to continue in year two." With that sort of positive response, Runge

and other administrators agreed to monitor closely as teacher Cassie Prater used *LANGUAGE! Live* with her students. Runge and **Dr. Lee Vreeland**, An Achievable Dream Vice President of Academics, were thrilled with *LANGUAGE! Live*'s initial results and the partnership Voyager Sopris Learning provided. Both administrators knew a positive change was taking place before their eyes—a development that was as exciting as it was motivating. "As soon as our students enter the classroom at the beginning of the school year, the teacher has them on this product so we can determine where each student needs to begin," Vreeland said. "We typically have some student performance data from previous years that we could use, but the *LANGUAGE! Live* data seems to be a better fit for identifying who needs the most intense assistance." She added, "Our teachers are now able to have more of a prescribed curriculum for those students. We can take individualized learning and instruction to a new level."



"As a teacher for 10 years, I have struggled to find a solution that truly reaches all of my students and effectively addresses their various current reading levels. With LANGUAGE! Live, I have finally been able to do that. The program is amazing because it allows me to customize each lesson for each student, based on their Lexile level."

—Cassie Prater, teacher, Newport News Public Schools

CONTACT US TO SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION:

800.547.6747 • [voyagersopris.com/literacy/language-live/overview](https://www.voyagersopris.com/literacy/language-live/overview)


VOYAGER SOPRIS
LEARNING®
a cambium company


Lexia®
a cambium company

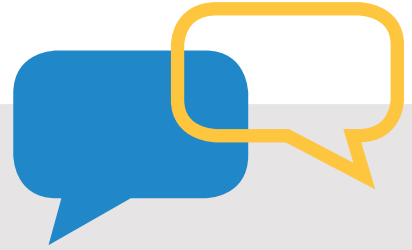
THE RESULTS

New Skills, Confidence, and a Passion for Learning

According to Vreeland, in just three years *LANGUAGE! Live* has dramatically impacted the middle school's Standards of Learning (SOL) results. "When the program is implemented with fidelity—by which I mean that a large percentage of the content is covered—there is a direct correlation between the program and our kids successfully passing the reading SOL. The students are not only scoring higher on the reading SOL, but they are scoring higher in all curriculums. *LANGUAGE! Live* is a comprehensive product that meets the needs of even our students with intensive needs and learning gaps. We're thrilled with the gains students have shown since the implementation."

Yet, test scores aren't the only noticeable change. Vreeland described how student confidence levels also are skyrocketing as a result of their newfound achievements with *LANGUAGE! Live*. Runge attributes this, in part, to the students' increased capacity for independent learning.

"We have seen a tremendous amount of growth with our current eighth graders who were using *LANGUAGE! Live* in sixth grade," Runge said. "These students are engaged learners now and even the weakest students from the outset are now largely reaching grade level. We've used a variety of products over the years, but *LANGUAGE! Live* is one that has allowed us to achieve the most significant gains with our then-lowest-achieving students. We've had a lot of growth, and even their desire to be learners has changed and grown. In fact, these students even understand other subjects better because they can read the course materials effectively."



Outstanding Customer Service Helps Busy Educators Implement *LANGUAGE! Live* Smoothly

All of the teachers and administrators at An Achievable Dream mentioned how, while the *LANGUAGE! Live* program itself is a success for its students, Voyager Sopris Learning's outstanding customer service makes it easy for busy teachers to implement and understand. "If it weren't for Theresa McKee, our rep, this likely wouldn't have happened," said Dr. Lee Vreeland. "The level of service is impeccable. We have been able to call her whenever we have questions. She is always quick to provide service and follow up."

CONTACT US TO SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION:
800.547.6747 • voyagersopris.com/literacy/language-live/overview



Amount of Instruction Makes a Difference on SOL Gains

The Data Behind the Success Story at Newport News, VA 2014–2016

Newport News Public Schools have been using the **LANGUAGE! Live** program since the 2014–2015 school year. *LANGUAGE! Live* provides individualized, engaging, explicit, and systematic literacy instruction to middle school students reading substantially below grade level. This report will use the Standards of Learning (SOL) test scores to determine progress made by students receiving *LANGUAGE! Live* instruction from the 2014 administration of the SOL to the 2016 administration.

One of the differences between *LANGUAGE! Live* and other adolescent reading programs from Voyager Sopris Learning is the ability to determine how much instruction has been delivered through the online component of the program. This feature allows for the grouping and comparison of students who have received different amounts of instruction. In

this case, we are able to compare the gains in SOL scores across four different groups. These groups are identified by a color and defined as follows:

- **Gray:** Being placed in the Gray group means students completed either zero Word Training (WT) or zero Text Training (TT) units.
- **Blue:** Blue means students completed between one and three TT units and at least one WT unit.
- **Blue with Green TT:** Blue with Green TT is a hybrid group and means students completed between one and three WT units and four or more TT units.
- **Green:** Being placed in the Green group means students completed four or more units of WT and TT. The Green group indicates sufficient instruction was received based on a 45-minute, five-day-a-week implementation.

Newport News, VA: *LANGUAGE! Live* Pacing and SOL Analysis

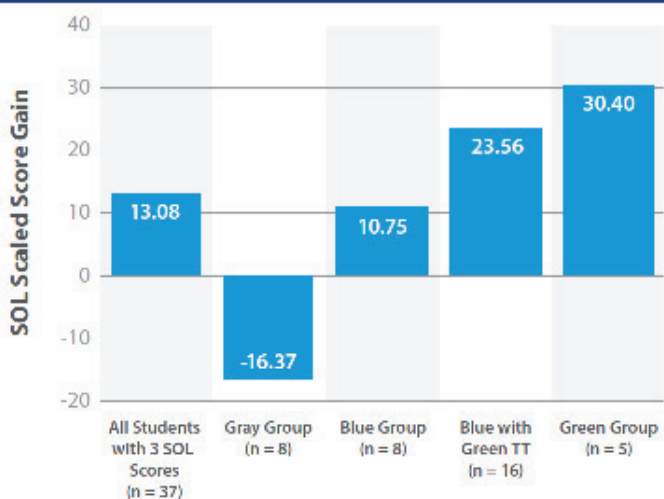


Figure 1. Newport News Results by *LANGUAGE! Live* Pacing Groups and Average SOL Gains

There is definitely a difference on the SOL score gains between 2014 and 2016 administrations based on the amount of instruction students received in *LANGUAGE! Live* during the 2015–2016 school year.

Figure 1 shows the gain between the 2014 and 2016 SOL administrations. The group representing All Students with three SOL Scores is presented first, showing an overall gain of 13.08 scaled score points. Next comes the Gray group, followed by the Blue, then Blue with Green TT, then the Green group. There is almost a 47-point difference between the gain made by the Gray group and the Green group.

CONTACT US TO SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION:

800.547.6747 • voyagersopris.com/literacy/language-live/overview

Figure 2 shows the difference in the average SOL scaled score for the 2014 and 2016 administrations for the different groups. Students in the groups Blue and above, with at least 1 unit of both WT and TT made average gains of 10.75 SOL scaled score points. Students in the Green group started below the Blue with Green TT group, but almost caught up on the 2016 administration, gaining an average of 30.40 SOL scaled score points. The Blue with Green TT group started higher than the other groups, except the Gray group, and finished at an average SOL scaled score of 400, which is the cut score for Pass/Proficient.

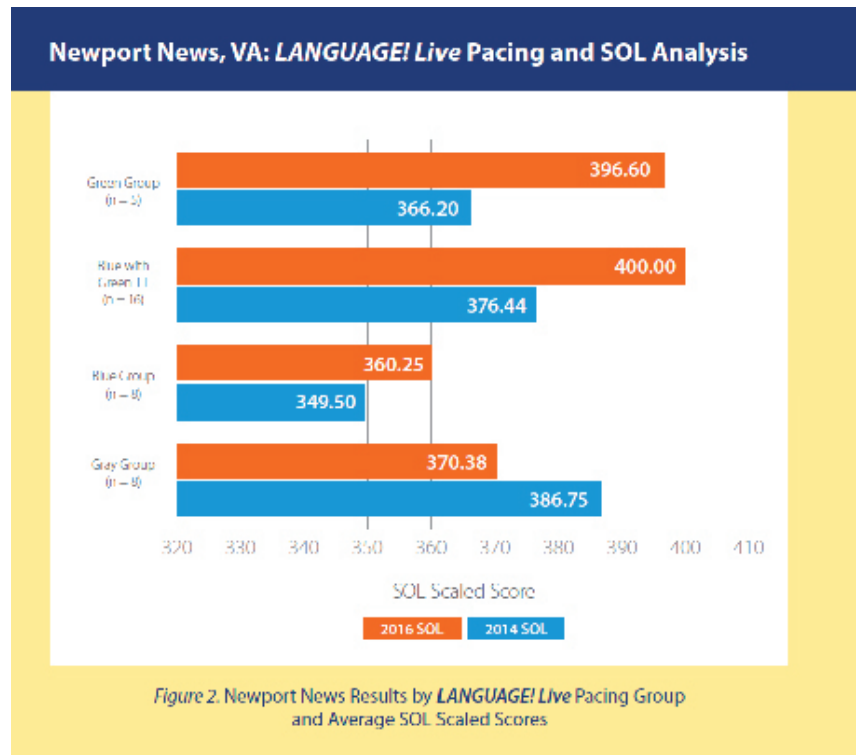


Table 1 (next page) provides additional information for each of the pacing groups. Besides the average scaled scores for the 2014 and 2016 administrations, the SOL gain for each group is provided in column five. Next, the standard deviations for each group are provided. The standard deviation is used to quantify the amount of variation or dispersion of the values in each pacing group.

In column eight of Table 1, the effect size statistic is provided. The effect size statistic¹, usually only calculated for groups of 10 or more students, is used as an indicator of program effectiveness. Effect size, in this case, is the difference between the mean 2014 SOL administration and the 2016 SOL administration scaled scores of students expressed in terms of standard deviation units. The effect sizes for all grades is 0.35, a small, but educationally meaningful effect size. The effect sizes for the pacing groups start in the negative range for the Gray group (-0.42) and then get positive and larger for the Blue through Green groups, 0.51 to 0.76, which are medium and educationally meaningful effect sizes. There is a statistically significant difference between the 2014 and 2016 SOL administrations for the All Grades group and for the Green and Blue with Green TT pacing groups.

¹ According to Cohen (1988), effect sizes (for differences expressed as means) of 0.2 are considered small, 0.5 are regarded as medium, and 0.8 are regarded as large. An effect size of 0.3 is considered educationally meaningful.

Table 1. Newport News Results by **LANGUAGE! Live** Pacing Group and SOL Scaled Scores

PACING GROUP	# STUDENTS	2014 SOL SCALED SCORE	2016 SOL SCALED SCORE	SOL GAIN	2014 SOL STANDARD DEVIATION	2016 SOL STANDARD DEVIATION	EFFECT SIZE	AVERAGE WT UNITS	AVERAGE TT UNITS
All Grades	37	371.46	384.54	13.08	37.100	36.802	0.35	2.70	3.43
Gray	8	386.75	370.38	-16.37	34.125	44.737	-0.42	1.75	1.63
Blue	8	349.50	360.25	10.75	28.420	13.895	0.51	3.25	1.38
Blue with Green TT	16	376.44	400.00	23.56	41.362	29.344	0.67	2.31	4.94
Green	5	366.20	396.60	30.40	30.906	48.998	0.76	4.60	4.80

The last two columns in Table 1 show the average number of WT and TT units for each group. For a 45-minute, five-day-a-week implementation, the expected number of units that could be completed is six WT and six TT. Because interruptions occur during the school day, sufficient instruction is defined as four or more WT and TT units completed during the academic year. In Table 1, the Green pacing group meets this pacing goal and shows the most SOL gain for any group. Also, the Green group had the largest effect size for any pacing group. The Blue with Green TT meets the TT unit goal, but not the WT unit goal, but still shows good SOL gain and a respectable effect size. The Blue with Green TT pacing groups demonstrates the importance of a balance between WT and TT instruction.

In summary and to provide context, students who received sufficient, or a good amount of instruction, as demonstrated by the number of WT and TT units completed, showed higher average SOL gain, 21.57 scaled score points, than the average across the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students at An Achievable Dream Middle and High School of 10.50 scaled score points². Basically, doubling the gain achieved by the sixth–eighth grade students is a very good start. The Blue, Blue with Green TT, and Green pacing groups were used to calculate the average for **LANGUAGE! Live** students. The next implementation goal would be to have more students receiving sufficient instruction to reach the Green pacing group.

² This average was derived from the results found at the Virginia Department of Education SOL Test Scoring & Performance Reports Website (pen.k12.va.us/testing/scoring/index.shtml).