

The driving concept behind the TargetTeach® solution is a laser focus on the development of a true standards-based curriculum.

## WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY: PULLING TOGETHER FOR SUCCESS

The imposing Art Deco Washington Elementary School is located on historic Route 66 in the town of Sapulpa, in Northeast Oklahoma's Green Country. Rich in pride and heritage, the original Washington School dates back to 1903 as the first education establishment in town, even predating Oklahoma's statehood.

Sapulpa and surrounds boast a past of singular cultural diversity and influence, with no fewer than six national flags having flown over the area in decades gone by. But it wasn't until 1850 that the town was first officially established when Creek Indian Chief Sapulpa, recognized as the first permanent settler, set up a trading post in what the town's web site indicates as "somewhere near the confluence of Polecat and Rock Creeks." Since then the town has been shaped and defined primarily by railroads and oil, with its downtown 1920's-period architecture and many family run businesses preserving a proud heritage and attesting to the community's strong ties with the past.

“What really caught my eye was the ongoing benchmark testing, and the multitude of detailed reports by teacher, by objective, and by student.”

Principal Alfred, Washington Elementary

Today, the convergence of interstate, state, and local highways has lead Sapulpa to adopt the tagline “Oklahoma's Most Connected City,” and it is evident the theme of connection extends beyond geography to embrace the community and its schools, as well, including Washington Elementary.



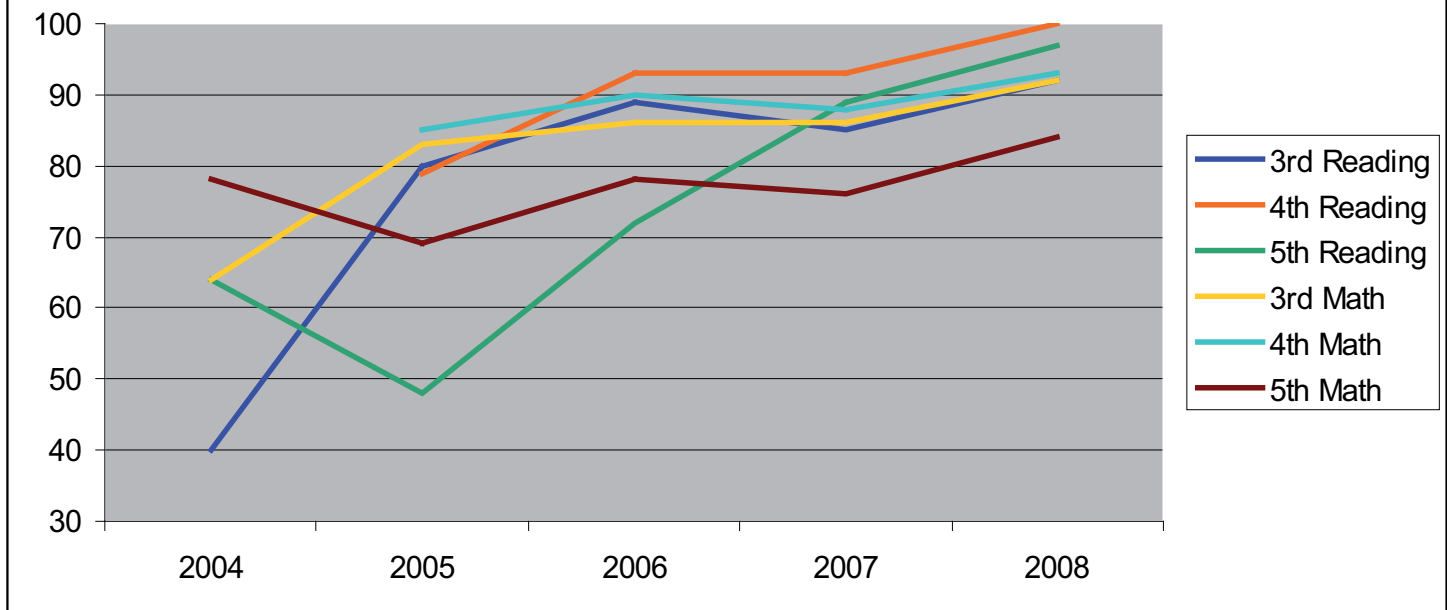
[ENI students at Washington Elementary.]

### ABOUT WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY

Washington Elementary serves a Pre-Kindergarten–fifth-grade student population of 307, with Native Americans comprising the primary portion of its 31 percent minority. Particular challenges faced by the school include a high rate of economically-disadvantaged families—more than 80 percent of students are on the free or reduced lunch program—and a significant annual student turnover rate of 13 percent. The school receives assistance in both the Title I high-need, and Title VII Native American categories.

In 2004, Washington was placed on Needs Improvement status for failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals in reading and math as designated by No Child Left Behind. With the school's Average Performance Index (API) having dipped below acceptable levels, Principal Bobby Alfred knew it would take a powerful program to get student achievement levels back on track, but he also

### Washington Elementary Proficiency 2004-2008



knew he could rely on Washington's strengths to help the school get there. A 100 percent highly qualified and experienced staff—with an average of 14 years' teaching experience—and both reading and math resource specialists meant Washington brought a core strength of expert human capital to the challenge.

A strong community connection was another school strength. Washington's active and supportive partners in education include the local Reasors Food Warehouse, Sapulpa Kiwanis, and the Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks, each of whom donate time and materials to benefit students and families.

This community connection also extended to students, who are taught the value and importance of giving back through community service. Washington has the only elementary Kiwanis' student chapter—the Washington K-Kids Club. Among their student club projects are donating library books to the Sapulpa Youth Shelter, and conducting a pet food and supply drive for a local animal shelter.

Most notably, however, the theme of connection is reflected in the sense of community and shared responsibility found among the staff of Washington Elementary. "When we have failure, it's all of us. When we have success, it's all of us," commented Alfred, who's been at Washington for 17 years.

Fourth grade teacher and 30 year teaching veteran Lu Ann Luker credits Alfred for fostering the uniquely-strong and trusting relationships at Washington, citing Alfred's appreciation for the contributions of each staff member and overall positive approach to leadership.

"There is a cooperative, supportive, extended family atmosphere that's immediately evident upon entering the building," said Luker.

In 2007, Washington Elementary was awarded the status of National Blue Ribbon School. In three years, it had transformed from the lowest-performing school in the district to one receiving its highest honor.



[Students in the Kiwanis' student chapter of the Washington K-Kids Club.]

## THE ENI SOLUTION

In his quest for the best transformation solution for Washington Elementary, Principal Alfred conducted an in-depth investigation of a variety of options. In the final evaluation, he was impressed by ENI's focus on formative assessment and data analysis.

"What really caught my eye was the ongoing benchmark testing, and the multitude of detailed reports by teacher, by objective, and by student," stated Alfred.

Additional convincing elements of ENI included: the comprehensive research-based strategies; the program's support of the full range of stakeholders—including teachers, administrators, and parents—and the ongoing interactive partnership that included deep support from ENI teacher coaches and the company's encouragement of feedback from Washington staff. Additionally, Alfred was impressed by the track record of continuous improvement ENI had effected in other districts, such as California's Pomona Unified School District, the Columbus City School District in Ohio, the New Orleans, Louisiana Public Schools, and others.

## TRANSFORMATION GOALS

Having made the decision to go with ENI, Alfred sat down with the company's representatives to prioritize academic needs and develop a customized program. Together, they agreed that Washington's major focus would be to increase student proficiency in reading comprehension and math computational skills.

In crafting a blueprint for reform, Washington and ENI worked in tandem to determine the following major strategies:

- Increase the use of computer technology to enrich student acquisition of skills in reading comprehension and math computation, including weekly computer lab work;
- Increase the variety of teaching methods to help appeal to all learning styles;
- And institute additional flexible grouping to address specific skill-level needs.

In addition to ENI, Washington's solution included the integration of a range of computer programs, including

Riverdeep's Reading and Math Destination Success, and United Streaming video resources to enhance skill acquisition and support the goal of increased technology use.

More specific strategies for Washington included a transition plan that would give a boost to student success. In the spring, preschoolers would visit Washington's Kindergarten program and Washington's fifth-graders would tour the middle school. Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers would also participate in the preschool vision and hearing screenings.

Strategies to address at-risk students and those needing remediation in certain skills were broadened to include the use of Title I and Title VII personnel to instruct and reinforce skills; the use of extended instructional time; a full day Kindergarten; and the institution of the Literacy First program.



[ENI students at Washington Elementary pull together for success.]

## ANTICIPATING CHALLENGES

Bobby Alfred's veteran leadership experience told him that anticipating and addressing obstacles would be a crucial piece of a successful TargetTeach® implementation.

The next challenge was getting clearance for the large number of substitutes he would need for his teachers to participate in several days of training. Alfred points to the strong district leadership as key to making this happen.

"Unless you have support from the central office, it won't work. Superintendent Mary Webb was able to see and appreciate the long-term goals and understood the need for teacher release time. She was convinced there was success coming up in our future," said Alfred.

First, he tackled the issue of reluctant personnel by announcing that he'd be happy to assist anyone in completing the paperwork if they desired a transfer. Nobody took him up on the offer.

According to Luker, "He told the staff that what we'd been doing wasn't working, so this is the way we're going."

Next, Alfred made the decision to include as many teachers as possible in ENI's direct training. Enlisting full participation from the teachers was a successful strategy. According to Luker, "Teachers got behind TargetTeach® and the training sessions. There was lots of support for the program."



[Washington Elementary students are proud of their achievement.]

## A RESEARCH-BASED PLAN

The driving concept behind the TargetTeach® solution is a laser focus on the development of a true standards-based curriculum. In accordance with findings by author and education researchers such as Robert Marzano, significant improvement in student achievement results when all teaching strategies, classroom materials, assessment tools, and professional development efforts work toward this single standards-based goal.

The TargetTeach® program further relies on the latest in educational theories and best practices from recognized leaders Benjamin Bloom, Grant Wiggins, Madeline Hunter, David Ausubel, and others.

Walking teachers through time-proven strategies every step of the way, TargetTeach® ensures that staff receives the kind of in-depth training and support that will allow them to sustain the program beyond the initial years ENI is directly involved.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With an active and ongoing professional learning community, Washington Elementary was already somewhat ahead of the curve when it came to collaboration and the informal sharing of ideas and lessons. ENI's approach built on that culture of trust to help teachers focus on the standards-based approach to learning.

As alignment and assessment are central elements of ENI's standards-based approach, numerous professional development workshops in which TargetTeach® teachers participate are devoted to aspects of those topics.

Washington Elementary staff began their hands-on training with a 2-day, grade-level workshop in which they aligned the Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills (P.A.S.S.) with their adopted text series. This exercise also had teachers look at the quality of materials for addressing each standard to be sure those materials enabled students to master the concept at the required level of performance indicated on Bloom's taxonomy.

This workshop also helped teachers identify objectives not covered by the textbook. ENI staff and Washington



[ENI teachers and leaders at Washington Elementary.]

teachers worked together to fill in any gaps with high-quality supplementary materials. ENI provided sample assessment items, model lessons and grade-level diagnostic evaluations, and the Washington staff pooled their best teacher-created resources to cover additional objectives.

Luker stated, “If somebody had some great materials on graphs and tables or comparing and contrasting, we placed them in a central file cabinet for easy access by all teachers.”

TargetTeach<sup>®</sup> also helped Washington educators ensure they were developing lessons that delivered high-quality, focused instruction. Workshops such as TargetStrategies<sup>®</sup> and TargetFundamentals<sup>®</sup> familiarized participants with lessons focused on research-based best practices and implementations.

Alfred has provided strong leadership to Washington by being a particularly active participant in the TargetTeach<sup>®</sup> implementation. “For any program to be successful, it takes stakeholder buy-in. How can I sell the program to teachers if I don’t understand and believe in the concepts?” he said.

Luker acknowledges that at first, it’s challenging to institute a whole new way of teaching and evaluating, but in the end knowing exactly what you need to teach and to whom, makes the process incredibly valuable. “Everybody is on the same page working toward the same goals. And right there in black and white, we can see if a student has mastered long division or another concept. The information is very specific.”

Luker also says the formative assessment process has spurred some motivational friendly competition among classes. “The kids brag about test scores,” she said.

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Fourth grade teacher, Lu Ann Luker

## TEACHER COACHES

Washington staff reports that teacher coaching was an especially supportive component of the TargetTeach<sup>®</sup> program. For a year and a half, an on-site coach observed classes on a regular basis and provided ongoing feedback and practical solutions in the areas of data interpretation, effective practices, prescriptive teaching, and differentiated learning. The coach—an experienced teacher and principal himself—became a trusted part of the Washington family. “The teachers and kids all knew him. It felt like he was part of our staff,” said Luker.

## THE VALUE OF REPORTS

Assessment ranks high as another element of the TargetTeach<sup>®</sup> program. Research shows that assessment data, when available in a timely manner, can be a powerful tool for continuous student improvement.

At the core of TargetTeach<sup>®</sup>’s assessment model is a data-driven decision making process that allows students, teachers, and parents to know precisely a student’s skill proficiency on any given day. As opposed to traditional summative assessment models, where a benchmark test is given annually and results are often not available for several months, formative assessments are short and continuous—administered every two to three weeks—and provide valuable up-to-the-minute diagnostic feedback that informs instruction for each student.

A major focus of both TargetTeach<sup>®</sup> workshops and teacher coaching is training schools in how to analyze assessment data to direct re-teaching and instructional extension. ENI conducted regular meetings with the

Washington staff and principal to examine test reports, pinpoint areas of concern, and develop new action plans.

At Washington, educators also found the formative assessments powerful professional development tools, allowing teachers to re-examine approaches to instruction on certain skills and to take a second look at the clarity of their assessment materials.

Principal Alfred identifies one report type in particular as a major selling point in his decision to go with ENI. "When I saw the report that gives the percentage of students in a class who missed a particular question on a test, I knew this would be valuable for both students and teachers.

This report helps teachers drill down to the specific wording of a particular question, and to receive feedback from students on why they answered the way they did."

Luker agrees that these comprehensive reports have helped teachers improve their instruction and design higher quality materials. She stated, "As a class, we go over the questions on each printed test after the results have come in. This helps us ensure the validity of test questions and spot areas that might need re-teaching or approaching in a different way."

## PARENT-SCHOOL CONNECTION

Research shows that when parents are involved in their students' education, students have a much higher degree of success in school. The TargetTeach® program helped Washington staff streamline and ramp up parent-teacher communication and involvement through several practical methods.

Primary ENI tools instituted by the Washington staff are the PAL Packets® (Parent Assisted Learning), available in English and Spanish. These packets include standards-aligned take home activities that help parents stay involved in their children's learning. Completing these activities and games is not mandatory, but at Washington teachers found that stickers, treats, bookmarks, and other encouragements yielded an impressively high completion rate. Unsure of an actual number, Luker guessed at a percentage between 90 and 95. Weekly home newsletters also reinforce learning by helping parents understand what is going on in the classroom.

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Fourth grade teacher, Lu Ann Luker



[ENI students at Washington Elementary.]

## RESULTS: TAKING STOCK OF PROGRESS

When Washington Elementary was first placed on the Needs Improvement list in 2004, the school had quite a distance to travel to raise scores in mathematics and reading from percentages as low as 50 and 60 percent. But, Luker notes, "It made us band together even more tightly."

As a result of the TargetTeach® intervention, test scores rose steadily each year, with percentages in 2007 reflecting a dramatic increase in student achievement. Most notably, reading scores leapt more than 40 percent for the fifth grade and almost 20 percent for fourth grade. Math results were equally impressive, with more than a 30 percent increase for both fourth and fifth grade scores.

There were also other indicators of success, many staff-related. Among these indicators were a 20 percent reduction in teacher absentee rates; increased teacher collaboration; a new school-wide culture of instructional alignment; a widespread protection of instructional time;

and a deeper level of thinking about instruction and the ENI process, it is extremely comforting and reassuring. You know what you're going to teach. The objectives are posted, and everybody's on the same page. "The material is challenging but everyone is very clear on it. We like it because we know exactly what we have to do. The lessons are laid out for us," continued Luker.

Students appreciate it too, with the mystery being taken out of benchmark tests. "Anxiety is alleviated because they've had so much regular practice through the ongoing formative assessments we've conducted in the classroom," said Luker. Luker continued, "When the kids take the OCCT test in the spring, it's very familiar. The template is the same, even down to wording, and the size and type of the font."

"Other district schools look at how clear and unified our instruction is. They wish they had TargetTeach® and have voiced that," Luker added.

## TIPS FOR OTHER SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

What tips does Washington have for other schools or districts considering implementing the TargetTeach® program?

Alfred stated, "Put 'nice to knows' on the back burner and focus on what kids need to know." It's not about teaching to the test, but about following state and national guidelines and doing it in various and different ways to ensure you're appealing to the range of learning



[ENI students have plenty to celebrate at Washington Elementary.]

styles. "When you're trying to effect rapid improvement, there's not a lot of room to move off the path."

Alfred also stands by his decision to involve as many teachers as possible in the initial ENI training, as this approach paved the way to a broad understanding and acceptance of the program's objectives and concepts.

From Luker's point of view, the infusion of electronic whiteboards to implement TargetTeach® was advantageous from both time- and money-saving angles. Large group presentations comprise a major portion of the curriculum, so instead of creating transparencies from binder materials and using them on an overhead projector, the district simply scanned the materials so teachers could pull them up on their classroom whiteboards.

Washington does not have a high rate of absenteeism, but for schools or districts who do, Luker suggests they think in advance about establishing a strong make up program. "TargetTeach® instruction is teacher directed so catching up on that hour of instruction is not something kids can do at home with parents, or on their own," she said.

At Washington, make up teaching is handled through a combination of processes, such as small, extended-day groups with the Title I specialist, and saving written materials from the whiteboard, so kids can copy and discuss them with the teacher. Luker suggests an option for high-absentee schools might include a dedicated teaching assistant who could help kids make up missed work.

## GOING FORWARD

As Washington continues to move forward into the 21st century, the staff is progressing in their efforts to hone and customize the TargetFundamentals® and TargetStrategies®, adding their own mnemonic devices, motions, rhymes, raps, and jingles to provide for all learning styles. And as the quest for academic excellence persists, so does the spirit of connection that is at the heart of the Supulpa community and Washington Elementary

In 2007, when Washington faculty opened a time capsule that had been buried on their school grounds in 1903, they were connected with their past by a book titled "The Bylaws and Constitution of the Creek Nation," written in 1890 in the original Native American language.

The next time a group of educators, students, and community members unbury and examine the contents of a Washington Elementary time capsule, it will be in the year 2058. Asked what vision he hopes Sapulpa citizens of the future will have of the present-day school from the photos, yearbooks, and other objects included in the capsule, Principal Alfred says, "I hope they'll see that Washington was a caring and educationally-sound school, and that it was part of a larger community that held them in high esteem."

Since 1973, the professionals at Evans Newton Incorporated (ENI) have been working with schools to improve student achievement using innovative, customized programs tailored to state objectives and standardized tests. Our TargetTeach® process has been used by schools and districts across the country to create dramatic improvement in student performance while empowering teachers and school leaders by establishing a research-based foundation for sustainable change.



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