

El Segundo Unified School District

Realizing Personalized, Student-Centered Learning

By Sean Brandlin, Personalized Learning Specialist and Jack Plotkin, Director of Innovation & Student Support Services at ESUSD

Overview:

Location: El Segundo, CA

Profile: K-12 Suburban School District

League of Innovative Schools member

Student Impact: 600 Students in Grades 5-9



The El Segundo Unified School District (ESUSD) embraces innovative practice for student growth and empowerment. The District motto, Transforming Education for a Changing World, highlights a focus on the true transformation needed for students to be successful in a vastly different world than previously known. A member of the prestigious League of Innovative Schools, ESUSD is constantly seeking to learn, grow, and improve their practices to be a leader in education innovation.

Goals:

- Cultivate student competencies and attributes on the ESUSD Graduate Profile.
- Increase student motivation, agency, and sense of empowerment through student centered learning.

Approach:

- Collaborate to develop core aspects of what personalized, student-centered learning should look like in ESUSD.
- Generate enthusiasm around their proprietary approach, AMP'd Learning, to represent features of Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose in learning tasks.
- Partner with Learner-Centered Collaborative to facilitate the core components of AMP'd Instruction, which centers on authentic learning tasks, mastery learning, targeted instruction, student ownership, and flexible pacing.
- Support teacher practice through a partial-release "Personalized Learning Specialist" who provides coaching and support, along with Learner-Centered Collaborative coaches.

Results:

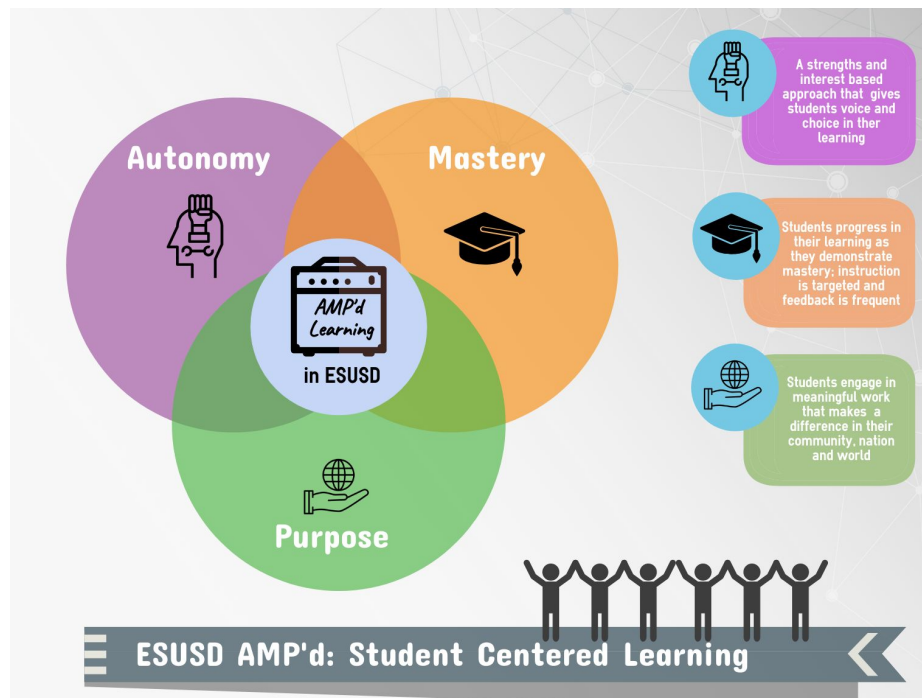
- Shifted focus of learning from teacher-centered to student-centered using walkthrough protocol; observed opportunities for mastery learning, targeted instruction, flexible pacing, and student ownership.
- Per student survey data, observations, and interviews, increased student-reported levels of motivation and sense of purpose in their learning.
- Per student records and goal-setting data, observed development of Graduate Profile attributes, CASEL competencies, and academic growth.

Seeking to best equip and empower students, ESUSD engaged in a comprehensive and ongoing dialogue with students, teachers, families, industry leaders, and the surrounding business community to develop key competencies on the ESUSD Graduate Profile.



The profile highlights attributes students' need to be successful in college and career in the digital age and beyond, and includes competencies such as "Global Collaborator and Leader" and "Creative and Critical Thinker." The Graduate Profile seeks to develop students who will achieve, succeed, and contribute positively to our world.

Tasked with nurturing these attributes with students as young as kindergarteners, the district recognized the need to push for more robust, personalized, student-centered education. The district began by bringing a core group of educators together to outline what student-centered learning should look like in ESUSD, ultimately developing its AMP'd Learning Model. AMP'd Learning calls out opportunities for student **A**utonomy, **M**astery, and sense of **P**urpose in their learning in order to increase their engagement and agency.

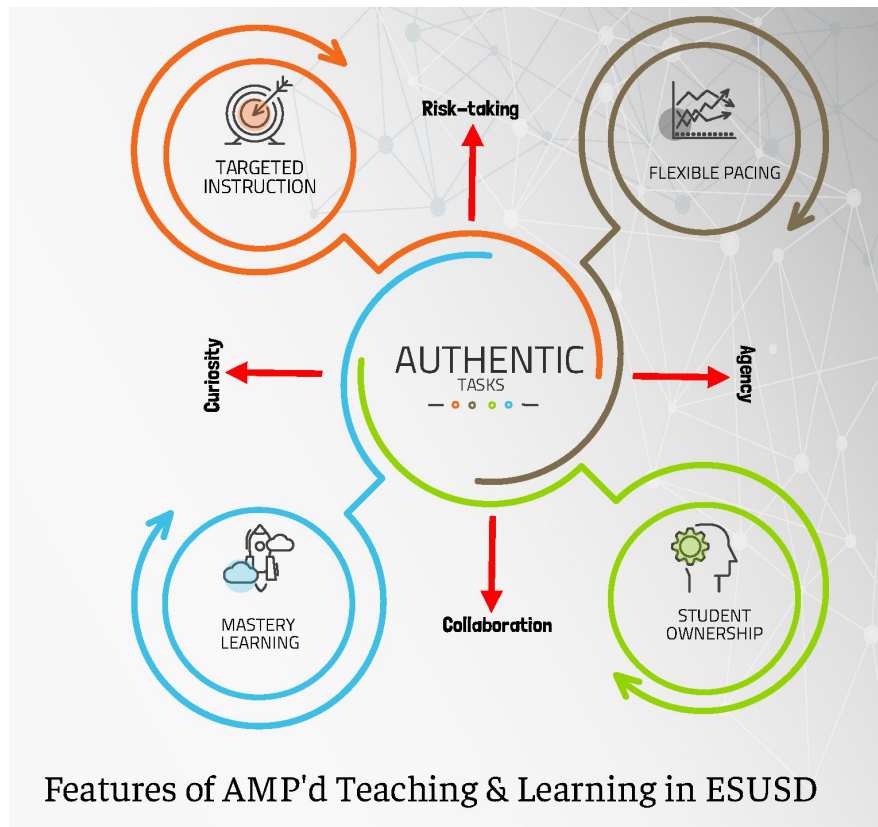


On the instructional side, ESUSD educators recognized authentic learning tasks being the critical pedagogical feature, and highlighted the need for mastery learning, targeted instruction, student ownership, and flexible pacing to support authentic learning.

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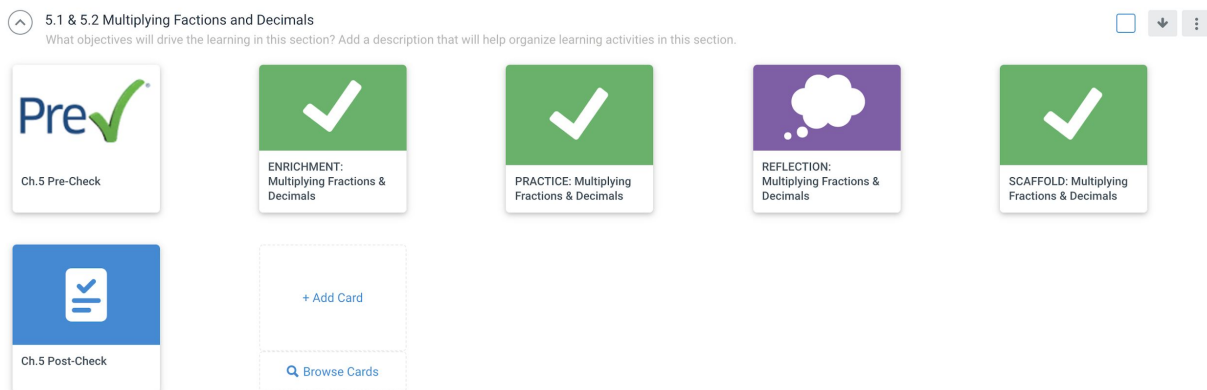
– Kim Stern, Sixth grade language and literature teacher, ESUSD



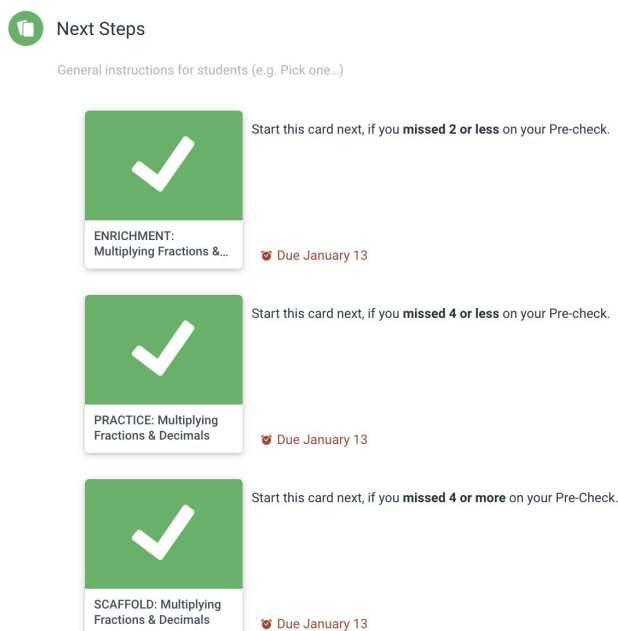
Putting AMP'd Teaching and Learning into Practice. A group of 11 teachers spanning three schools and teaching from grades 5 to 9 began to collaborate regularly around delivering this model. To support their work, ESUSD needed an experienced partner and a robust platform to facilitate these learning features. They ultimately partnered with Learner-Centered Collaborative, who offered the greatest level of support with the most effective learning platform, Altitude Learning. Sixth grade language and literature teacher Kim Stern describes the district's process: "We visited multiple schools using all kinds of learning management systems, and ultimately all came to a consensus around the Altitude Platform."

Her teacher partner, Jake Booterbaugh, who teaches sixth and eighth grade language and literature, agrees: "We just found it easiest for kids to use, easiest for us to learn, and most effective in our work toward personalized learning." The teachers and administrators using the platform convene monthly and meet regularly not only with Learner-Centered Collaborative coaches, but with the district's own personalized learning specialist, Sean Brandlin.

In its first year of use, the cohort of ESUSD teachers are continually refining their units and lessons and continuing to capitalize on platform features. For example, sixth grade math teacher Carley Finkel utilizes the Altitude Learning platform to implement activities that focus on strategically targeted instruction and mastery learning based on formative data she acquires. She utilizes pre-assessments related to math concepts and then provides multiple pathways based on achievement levels, providing small group and individual instruction for the few who need more help, while accessing enrichment for those ready to delve deeper.




Students are able to self-select the appropriate learning activity based on their assessment result. She notes the increase in student agency: “Students feel more purposeful in their learning because they can utilize their strengths as well as recognize areas where they need to grow and work on mastering them.”




“Students feel more purposeful in their learning because they can utilize their strengths as well as recognize areas where they need to grow and work on mastering them.”

– Carley Finkel, Sixth grade math teacher, ESUSD


Similarly, 9th grade English teacher Samantha Slama provides opportunities for student ownership and reflection. Her students recently participated in a fishbowl discussion/Socratic seminar about the novel *Lord of the Flies*. Students participated in collaborative groups and were tasked with evaluating their individual contributions as well as those of their partners. Students then took that feedback and completed a self-assessment in the Altitude Learning platform. Ms. Slama highlighted, "It's great to see students reflecting, sharing valuable feedback with their peers, and fully taking ownership of their learning. The platform has really facilitated that piece."


 **Assessments**


 **Samantha Slama**
11 days ago


"Thank you for your insightful and enthusiastic participation in our discussion! You were a driver of the conversation and added so much value. The points I especially liked were how you observed even Golding referred to Jack as chief and how you commented on their diminishing appreciation for human life."


ELA


(SL.9-10.1a) Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparatio...  ^


 The learner did not read or prepare for the discussion.


 The learner read the chapter but was unprepared for a full discussion.


 The learner demonstrated close reading and clear understanding of the chapter.


 The learner came prepared with both a clear understanding of the chapter and questions to ask.

(SL.9-10.1c) Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or...  ^

 The learner did not participate in the discussion or just repeated others' ideas.

 The learner participated briefly in the discussion but did not ask any questions to drive conversation.

 The learner was an active participant and was thoughtful and engaged throughout the discussion.

 The learner drove the discussion. The learner participated thoughtfully, was engaged throughout the discussion, and asked at least one thought-provoking question.

Fifth grade teacher Dana Brooks noted, “Within each authentic task there are elements of voice and choice and the learning experiences provide students with differentiated resources as well as flexible pacing. Throughout a given unit, we can use assessment data per a formative check delivered through the Altitude Learning platform to pull together small groups of students that require extra support.”

Boosting Efficacy and Engagement Through Authentic Learning Experiences. Preliminary data show gains in both teacher sense of efficacy and student engagement. As sixth and eighth grade language and literature teacher Jake Booterbaugh states, “I strive to create meaningful and purposeful learning experiences where students are afforded voice and choice in how they can demonstrate their understanding of the material and overall growth. The Altitude Learning platform allows me to tailor my lessons for each individual student based on their strengths, areas where they can grow, and showcase their learning through multiple avenues.”

AMP’d Learning teachers recognize that parents are also a vital component of the learning process. Sixth and seventh grade science teacher Erin Bender highlighted parent engagement in her classroom: “The Altitude Learning platform allows me to engage parents in the learning process as opposed to just the final end-of-unit product. Through the Stream feature, students can share their goals, assessment results, writing samples, and projects home. As we are working with students to develop more autonomy, the platform allows parents to remain connected to the classroom and their child’s learning experiences.”

Steps

*Required

- Complete the [Bill of Rights Pre-Assessment](#). Once you submit the assessment, click on the View Score button to see your results. Based on your results, proceed to steps 2, 3, or 4 below.
- If you answered **7 OR 8 QUESTIONS CORRECTLY**, watch the [Bill of Rights TED Ed video](#). Then retake the [Bill of Rights Pre-Assessment](#). Repeat as needed before moving onto Step 4.
- If you answered **6 OR FEWER QUESTIONS CORRECTLY**, watch the [Bill of Rights \(Disney Version\)](#) and review the Bill of Rights (w/ Preamble) PDF. Then retake the [Bill of Rights Pre-Assessment](#). Repeat as needed before moving onto Step 4.

Bill of Rights (w/ Preamble)...

- If you answered **9 OR MORE QUESTIONS CORRECTLY**, move on to Step 5 below and register for our class on iCivics.
- Click [here](#) to register as a student in our iCivics class. Read the instructions carefully and follow them correctly. Class code is listed on the board. Find the **Do I Have a Right?** assignment and play the game.
- Play **Do I Have a Right?** game and see how well you do.
- After winning/losing in the **Do I Have a Right?** game, answer the questions listed below and submit this card.
- Once you submit this card, select 1 one of the cards within the Next Steps section to learn more about landmark court cases related to that amendment.

Questions

*Required

1. How do you feel about your knowledge of the Bill of Rights?
2. Explain why you feel that way.

I believe I know what each amendment means on a basic level. I do however, believe I could learn more about what each part of the amendments mean. For example, I understood that the 5th Amendment allowed for the right to not incriminate yourself, but I didn't realize what double jeopardy or what due process was.

Teachers anecdotally report increased levels of observed engagement, and the school will formally measure engagement levels on student surveys and focus groups at year end. So far, students who may have had more traditional models in the past shared their own increased levels of motivation. "It's different this year because we get to control how we learn and reflect on what we are learning," an eighth grader pointed out. "We get to play a bigger part in our learning and focus on different things that may interest us. For instance, we recently were able to play a game about our rights and protections in the Bill of Rights. Then we got to choose one of the amendments to explore more as well as review landmark court cases. This was much more engaging and we learned more than simply filling out a worksheet."

Next Steps

Select 1 of the cards below to learn more about landmark court cases related to several of the important amendments in the Bill of Rights.



First
Amendmen...

Select this card if you are interested in the **5 freedoms: religion, speech, press, the right to assembly, and the right to petition the government.**

[Start](#)



Second
Amendmen...

Select this card if you are interested in the **"right to bear arms."**

[Started](#)



Fourth
Amendmen...

Select this card if you are interested in **lawful and unlawful searches and seizures.**

[Done](#)



Fifth
Amendmen...

Select this card if you are interested in the **right to a grand jury, forbidding "double jeopardy" (preventing an accused person from being tried again on the same (or similar) charges and on the same facts, following a valid acquittal or conviction), and protection against self-incrimination.**

[Start](#)



Sixth
Amendmen...

Select this card if you are interested in the **right to a fair trial including a speedy and public trial, an impartial (fair) jury, a notice of accusation, a confrontation of witnesses, and the right to a lawyer.**

[Start](#)



Eighth
Amendmen...

Select this card if you are interested in the **prohibition of excessive bail, fines, or cruel and unusual punishments (death penalty).**

[Start](#)

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"We get to play a bigger part in our learning and focus on different things that may interest us. We recently were able to play a game about our rights and protections in the Bill of Rights. Then we got to choose one of the amendments to explore more as well as review landmark court cases. This was much more engaging and we learned more than simply filling out a worksheet."

- Eighth grade student, ESUSD

Having generated significant buzz around the innovative work of the teachers, the power of the platform, and the excitement of students, ESUSD looks to expand its AMP'd Learning implementation into a fourth school in 2020-21 and increase the number of teachers opting into the model.

*To connect and learn more about implementing authentic learning practices,
 email collaborate@learnercentered.org*