

Words Liive Crossroads Preparatory Academy



Words Liive (WL) is a web platform for lesson plan development that isolates grammar structure and literary techniques in song lyrics and integrates them into classroom source texts (e.g., novels, speeches) commonly used in primary and secondary schools' English Language Arts (ELA) classes to improve student literacy. In a new feature, teachers can request customized content that is relevant to their classroom.

Crossroads Preparatory Academy chose to partner with Words Liive to test implementation and to help make ELA instruction culturally relevant and engaging, to impact students' concept acquisition and retention and ultimately increase achievement. Thus the purpose of research was two-fold: 1) To provide feedback on classroom implementation to improve the platform; and, 2) To test the conjectures that student engagement and academic performance would be higher when associated with ELA lessons taught using Words Liive (WL) when compared to lessons taught without using Words Liive (non-WL). The 10th grade ELA teacher served as the lead end user for the study.

Theory of Action

Inputs - Key Levers - Innovation/ Intervention
If we do the following...

- a. Link literary learning objectives in music students like
- b. Provide teachers the ability to build a lesson plan, including selection of music and matched learning objectives
- c. Provide teachers the ability to export lesson plan for implementation

Desired Practice - Implementation - Outputs
Then we will impact practice/ behavior in the following ways...

- a. Teachers will integrate music into their lesson plans
- b. Teachers will use music-enhanced content to engage students in teaching the learning objectives
- c. Teachers will assess student performance and scaffold material based on learning gaps

Measurable Student Outcomes by Nov 8 - Impact Goals
And we will reach our student outcome goals...

- a. Increased student engagement
- b. Increased academic performance



Crossroads Preparatory Academy



SCHOOL BACKGROUND & PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Crossroads Preparatory Academy (CPA) is a public charter school founded in 2017 to provide "high-quality seats" to high school students after establishing two lower schools and identifying a need for expansion. In previous years the district was the highest performing charter school district in the state of Missouri. The Academy was voted Charter School of the Year in its founding year, in which it served students in grades 7-9. The school is highly focused on personalized, project-based learning experiences, 21st century learning skills, community engagement, and college and career readiness - making it ideal for testing an early stage innovation. It uses downtown Kansas City, where it is located, as its extended classroom. In 2017, about 60% of students received free-and-reduced-price lunch. While Crossroads schools have performed well on the ELA state exam, CPA embraces opportunities to provide their students with new and engaging approaches to learning.

METHODOLOGY

Implementation data was collected using an instructional log template that was completed each time a lesson was taught using WL, as well as a few open-ended interviews with the lead end user following implementation. The instructional log template included the lesson objective, song and texts used in the lesson, reasons for each instructional choice, evidence of what went well and what could have been improved, and overall reflection.

A combination of exit tickets were used to measure student engagement and performance. The student engagement exit ticket was a 3-question survey which asked students to rate their enjoyment, concentration, and interest (i.e., Sherman, 2013) after every WL lesson and randomly after non-WL lessons. Academic performance was assessed using the exit ticket implemented by the teacher as a part of classroom instruction.

FINDINGS

The lead end user had valuable feedback concerning the key levers that initially limited her ability to implement the material with high-quality. For example, she struggled early on to find music on the platform with good examples of the learning objectives her students needed. She did implement during this period and her instinct was validated. She found classroom discussion to be engaging but also that the students lack of clarity about the meaning of concepts taught based on examples. This was quickly resolved through customization of content that directly served her classes needs, which she said paid off through a noticeable increase in engagement in the lesson. She was very excited about the outcome of teaching the customized content exclaiming that it was by far the best lesson she had taught during the school year up until that time. Other insights she had were about the usability of the platform's export the lesson plan feature, including the formative assessment. These features were not readymade features for her and resulted in more planning time than she expected. She was ultimately able to implement three times, including one time early on with a response to intervention (RTI) group.

The LEU described student engagement as a result of teaching Words Liive in her instructional log. While reflecting on her first time teaching two different classes using WL she noted, "I felt both classes participated more with less teacher prompting." But, in another log, she wondered if engagement would be increased with more relevant song choices. This was before receiving the customized content. The quantitative data collected on student engagement somewhat mirrored the LEU feedback. Overall, responses to student engagement surveys taken after WL lessons had mostly similar ratings to student engagement surveys taken after non-WL lessons. Enjoyment was rated slightly higher, on average, for non-WL lessons compared to WL lessons. However, the customized WL lesson had the highest rated enjoyment out of all lessons surveyed, suggesting the potential of this feature to increase student engagement.

There were no differences between academic performance associated with WL lessons and non-WL lessons.

MODIFICATIONS

The next version of Words Liive includes a ticketing system for teachers intended to expedite the customization process. While planned prior to this study, the study validates the need for this feature. As a result of this study, Words Liive has begun analyzing and refining the examples of literary concepts embedded in the song lyrics available on the platform, revisiting the lesson plan export function and considering more useful tools such as lesson plan excerpts, and updating the formative assessment resource to include a bank of standards-aligned items sourced by teachers from which teachers can choose - a recommendation that came from the LEU.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the deep engagement with CPA and the LEU led to meaningful insights and recommendations that can make Words Liive more accommodating and useful for teachers. The outcome data suggests there may be increased potential to impact engagement when a teacher requests customized content for their classroom. However, an additional study after the next iteration of WL is needed to continue to investigate impact based on those changes. As well, two major caveats to observing outcomes is the limited sample size and cross-sectional nature of the study. Investigating outcomes across teachers, schools, and time would give a clearer indicator to true differences occurring from separate instructional techniques.