

# Students Raise STAAR Scores in English with NoRedInk



## Wylie Independent School District (ISD)

Wylie, Texas (Collin County)

[www.wylieisd.net](http://www.wylieisd.net)

### DISTRICT DATA

- 20 schools, preK-12
- 17,164 students
- 25% economically disadvantaged
- 11% limited English proficient (LEP)
- 10% students with disabilities

### CHALLENGES

- Students entering high school with a wide variety of writing skills from highly proficient to limited
- Difficulty differentiating instruction using textbooks and teacher-created materials
- Inability to provide immediate feedback to multiple students at once
- Limited insight into student progress against Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards

### IMPLEMENTATION

- ✓ NoRedInk Premium
- ✓ Grades 7-12, including:
  - Limited English proficient
  - Economically disadvantaged
  - Students with disabilities

### RESULTS

#### Improved

- ✓ Performance on STAAR end-of-course (EOC) assessments for English I and II
- ✓ STAAR English I Written Composition ratings
- ✓ Student confidence in writing



In 2018-19, Wylie ISD earned an overall grade of an “A” from the Texas Education Agency based on student achievement, school progress, and closing achievement gaps. The district performs exceptionally well in preparing students for success in school and after high school, and it continues to strive to improve learning for each student. Writing instruction is a key part of that.

“Writing is always a focus. We wanted to provide more tools, especially technology tools, to truly individualize instruction and meet students where they are. That’s why we chose NoRedInk,” said Stephen Davis, Ed.D., executive director of secondary curriculum for Wylie ISD, a fast-growing school system located 24 miles northeast of metropolitan Dallas.

“We had been using textbooks and teacher-created materials,” said Tedra Ault, the high school ELAR learning specialist for Wylie ISD. “With NoRedInk, teachers can now provide practice that meets the needs of each student, instead of having everybody practice the same thing at the same time.”

## Differentiating instruction to address writing gaps

Wylie ISD began using NoRedInk Premium in 2017-18 after several teachers shared how much they and their students enjoyed using the free version of the curriculum. NoRedInk Premium provides a complete, adaptive writing curriculum for students in grades 5-12. In Wylie ISD, it is used in grades 7-12 in every middle school and high school.

“Some students come to high school struggling with writing skills and the writing process in general,” said Ashley Loyd, an ELAR teacher at Wylie East High School. “NoRedInk helps us fill in the gaps.”



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— **Stephen Davis, Ed.D.**, executive director of secondary curriculum for Wylie ISD

NoRedInk’s online curriculum includes diagnostic tools and assessments, targeted skills practice, a writing platform that guides students through the drafting and revision process, and instructional resources for teachers. Wylie ISD teachers use these materials and the platform’s live tracking capabilities to prioritize instruction and intervene to meet students’ needs.

“With NoRedInk, I can see strengths and weaknesses for the whole class and individuals,” said Loyd. “I can then target those skills and assign practice for on-the-spot remediation.”

## Providing immediate feedback for faster progress

NoRedInk’s mastery-based assignments require Wylie ISD students to demonstrate understanding of a skill before advancing. According to Loyd, this approach saves time for both students and teachers.



“Students want to know if they’re right before they move to the next step. With NoRedInk, they know immediately if they’re on the right track. This gives them the confidence to move forward so they can progress faster,” said Loyd.

## Building stronger writers

Wylie ISD teachers guide students through the writing and revision process using several of NoRedInk’s writing features, including Quick Writes, Guided Drafts, Self Review, and Peer Review.

“Once students have mastered the practice, they immediately go to a written assignment to apply and reinforce those skills,” said Loyd.

“NoRedInk is helping us build stronger writers,” said Ault. “Before, when students would do assignments on paper, teachers would take them home, grade them, and get them back to students, but by then they had moved on to something else. With NoRedInk, students get immediate feedback, and the teacher can spend time with students who are struggling the most. This takes stress off of students because they know they’ll get the help they need. That’s why we’ve seen growth on the STAAR.”

## Aligning instruction with standards

NoRedInk’s standards filters allow Wylie ISD teachers to align their instruction with the TEKS. “NoRedInk helps students prepare for the STAAR end-of-course assessments in English. It helps them with composition, revision, and editing,” said Ault.

“It also builds and reinforces the skills that will benefit them on the SAT and ACT,” said Loyd.

## Increasing STAAR English I Written Composition ratings

Wylie ISD students achieved significant gains on the Written Composition component of the STAAR EOC assessment for English I (see Appendix B).

“Students’ writing scores have shown the most growth over the past two years, especially with our English language learners and students with disabilities,” said Loyd. “A lower number of students are scoring 0 to 4 on their essays and a higher number are scoring 5 to 8. They are not only able to edit and revise their writing, but they are writing at higher levels because of NoRedInk.”

## Improving performance on STAAR end-of-course (EOC) assessment for English I

Since Wylie ISD implemented NoRedInk in 2017, students have achieved measurable gains on the STAAR EOC assessment for English I (see Appendix A).

### Gains for all students

“On the STAAR end-of-course assessment for English I, all students’ scores—especially in our special programs—grew tremendously in the first two years of using NoRedInk. The number of students going from ‘Did Not Meet’ to ‘Meets’ or ‘Masters Grade Level’ exceeded our expectations,” said Loyd.

“In 2017, our average percent score for all students was almost 70 percent, with around 75 percent of students at ‘Approaches Grade Level.’ In 2018, after the first year of implementing NoRedInk, our average percent score was almost 73 percent, with over 81 percent of students at ‘Approaches Grade Level,’ almost 70 percent at ‘Meets,’ and over 14 percent at ‘Masters.’ In 2019, not only did our student population grow by 124 students, but more students scored at ‘Approaches’ and ‘Meets,’ and we almost doubled the number of students at ‘Masters Grade Level,’” she continued.



### Gains for economically disadvantaged students

From 2018 to 2019, the number of economically disadvantaged students at “Masters Grade Level” more than doubled—jumping from 5.38 percent to 12.71 percent in just one year.



### Gains for limited English proficient students

The number of LEP students at “Approaches Grade Level” increased by more than 50 percent, rising from 26.76 percent in 2018 to 40.59 percent in 2019. The percentage of LEP students at “Meets Grade Level” also grew from 12.68 percent to 16.83 percent.

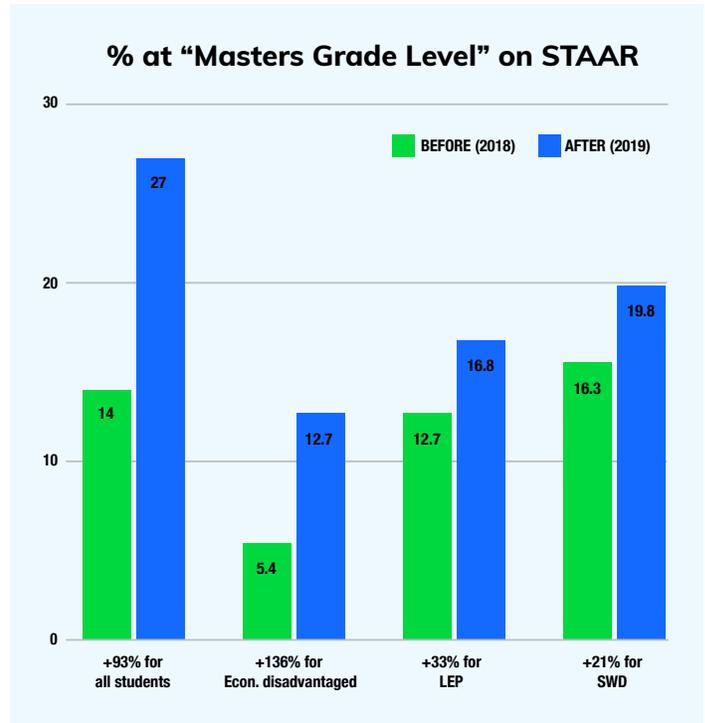


### Gains for students with disabilities

The number of students with disabilities at “Approaches Grade Level” increased by 20 percent, rising from 29.59 percent in 2018 to 35.54 percent in 2019. In addition, the percentage of students with disabilities at “Masters Grade Level” rose from 16.33 percent to 19.83 percent.

## Achieving growth on STAAR EOC assessment for English II

“We saw similar growth in English II,” said Loyd. “While the class of 2021 began their freshman year an average of 12 points behind the class before them, that gap was closed to less than one point by the end of their sophomore year. These students were the first to use NoRedInk both years. This proves the impact NoRedInk can have on all students with the right implementation. Students’ writing skills grew exponentially, and the students who saw the most improvement in English II were students with disabilities.”



## Creating a successful partnership

“We’re now in year three of our implementation,” said Davis. “The folks at NoRedInk are good people. They’re very responsive and helpful. They’ve always been a good partner for us.”

## APPENDIX A

### Wylie ISD STAAR End-of-Course Assessment – English I Summary Report

Growth from 2018 to 2019				
	Percent Score	Approaches Grade Level	Meets Grade Level	Masters Grade Level
<b>All Students</b>	<b>+1.93</b>	<b>+2.56</b>	<b>+5.34</b>	<b>+13.64</b>
Economically Disadvantaged	-0.71	+0.65	+0.69	+7.33
Limited English Proficient	+0.85	+13.83	+4.15	0
Students with Disabilities	+0.50	+5.95	+3.5	+0.83

Spring 2018				
	Percent Score	Approaches Grade Level	Meets Grade Level	Masters Grade Level
<b>All Students</b>	<b>72.61%</b>	<b>81.3%</b>	<b>69.85%</b>	<b>14.09%</b>
Economically Disadvantaged	66.44%	69.41%	55.52%	5.38%
Limited English Proficient	50.75%	26.76%	12.68%	0%
Students with Disabilities	51.17%	29.59%	16.33%	0%

Spring 2019				
	Percent Score	Approaches Grade Level	Meets Grade Level	Masters Grade Level
<b>All Students</b>	<b>74.54%</b>	<b>83.86%</b>	<b>75.19%</b>	<b>27.73%</b>
Economically Disadvantaged	65.73%	70.06%	56.21%	12.71%
Limited English Proficient	51.6%	40.59%	16.83%	0%
Students with Disabilities	51.67%	35.54%	19.83%	0.83%

STAAR Gains		% Before	% After	% Increase
<b>All Students</b>	<b>Average score</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>+7%</b>
	<b>Masters Grade Level</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>+93%</b>
Economically Disadvantaged	Masters Grade Level	5.38	12.71	+136%
Limited English Proficient	Approaches Grade Level	26.76	40.59	+52%
	Masters Grade Level	12.68	16.83	+33%
Students with Disabilities	Approaches Grade Level	29.59	35.54	+20%
	Masters Grade Level	16.33	19.83	+21%

## APPENDIX B

### Wylie ISD STAAR End-of-Course Assessment – English I Written Composition – Rating Summary

Growth from 2018 to 2019								
Ratings	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
All Students	-0.48	-0.05	-5.76	-4.77	-1.53	+3.78	+5.07	+3.74
Economically Disadvantaged	-0.01	+1.95	-7.68	-1.78	-3.73	+5.9	+2.25	+3.1
LEP	-0.84	-6.65	-6.12	+6.48	+5.98	+1.14	0	0
Students with Disabilities	-3.83	+7.9	-10.19	+9.83	+0.49	+0.44	+1.65	+0.83

Spring 2018								
Ratings	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
All Students	1.15%	6.18%	13.01%	27.27%	22.16%	20.51%	7.41%	2.31%
Economically Disadvantaged	1.7%	10.2%	19.83%	30.59%	21.53%	11.9%	3.68%	0.57%
LEP	2.82%	32.39%	23.94%	28.17%	9.86%	2.82%	0%	0%
Students with Disabilities	7.14%	30.61%	27.55%	26.53%	6.12%	2.04%	0%	0%

Spring 2019								
Ratings	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
All Students	0.67%	6.13%	7.25%	22.5%	20.63%	24.29%	12.48%	6.05%
Economically Disadvantaged	1.69%	12.15%	12.15%	28.81%	17.8%	17.8%	5.93%	3.67%
LEP	1.98%	25.74%	17.82%	34.65%	15.84%	3.96%	0%	0%
Students with Disabilities	3.31%	31.4%	17.36%	36.36%	6.61%	2.48%	1.65%	0.83%

\* STAAR Written Composition ratings: 0 – Non-scorable; 2 – Very Limited; 3 – Between Very Limited and Basic; 4 – Basic; 5 – Between Basic and Satisfactory; 6 – Satisfactory; 7 – Between Satisfactory and Accomplished; 8 – Accomplished.



Learning Experience Design (LXD)

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# NoRedInk Efficacy Study Review

Third-Party, Expert ESSA Evidence Level Review

by Rachel Schechter, Ph.D., founder of LXD Research

## Study Report Reviewed

Students Raise STAAR Scores in English with NoRedInk

## ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) Evidence Level

This study, in combination with another submitted study to LXD Research, demonstrates a Promising rating for NoRedInk

## Provider

NoRedInk

## Study Summary

This study used a cohort design to compare STAAR English results, for before and after implementing the NoRedInk program. Data was collected for students in grades 7-12 across 20 schools. One quarter of students were economically disadvantaged, 11% of students were limited English proficient (LEP), and 10% of students had learning disabilities. The study examined STAAR end-of-course assessments for English I and II, as well as Written Composition ratings. Feedback from teachers suggested that students had more opportunities to practice writing at their own level, and target skills for acceleration assigned by their teacher, to build their writing abilities across the year. STAAR scores reflected the improvement noticed by the educators, with improvements in the proportion of students approaching and meeting grade-level benchmarks. Notably, a substantially larger than typical proportion of students scoring Masters Grade Level was seen at the district compared to years past. Gains over two years for subgroups including Economically Disadvantaged and LEP also outpaced the expected growth. These gains were correlated with improved ratings on the Written Composition assessments, where the percentage of students scoring 6-8 (out of 8) improved from 30% to 43%.



## Product Description

NoRedInk ([www.noredink.com](http://www.noredink.com)) is an adaptive learning platform aimed at supporting students' grammar and writing skills. NoRedInk allows students to practice their language skills with authentic and engaging text. The platform provides immediate feedback and tracks student progress over time. NoRedInk has gained widespread popularity and adoption by teachers across the United States since its launch in 2012. Mastering grammar and writing topics in NoRedInk is hypothesized to result in improved language skills for students in grades 3-12. Within NoRedInk, students can attempt questions that are aligned with various language topics. Topics range from commonly confused words and capitalization rules to parallel structure and active vs. passive voice. NoRedInk tracks students' performance over time on each topic, and when students have demonstrated consistent accuracy on a given topic, they are considered to have mastered it.

## Study Sample and Usage Description

Who was in the study?

Data was collected for students in grades 7-12 across 20 schools. One quarter of students were economically disadvantaged, 11% of students were limited English proficient (LEP), and 10% of students had learning disabilities.

What did the NoRedInk implementation look like?

LXD Research reached out to the company to collect more information about the implementation of NoRedInk at the district over the study period.

- Approximately 5,000 students used NoRedInk during the 2016-2017 school year and they completed on average 15 assignments each.
- Use of NoRedInk grew over each year, with 2022-2023 reaching nearly 10,000 students who completed an average of over 20 assignments each.
- This data supports the correlational design of this study by showing how NoRedInk reached more students and was utilized more intensely over the course of the study period.

## Research Questions

- Is the expansion of NoRedInk use related to an increase in the proportion of students approaching and meeting grade-level benchmarks on the English I standardized state tests, STAAR?
- How does the trend in Writing Composition ratings change over time, as NoRedInk implementation widened in the district?
- How do results change across economic, learning, and language status demographics?



## Analysis Method

- STAAR English assessment scores from 2019 (after 18 months of use) were compared with from 2018 (after 6 months of use).
- Relative and absolute differences in both achievement and rates of mastery were calculated.
- Results were compared across demographic groups for the time period.

## Main Research Findings

- Students' STAAR scores improved over the two years, with an additional 13.69% of students reaching the Masters Grade Level designation from 2018 to 2019.
- Students in the Economically Disadvantaged subgroup contributed to these gains, with this group seeing an additional 7.33% of students in the Masters Grade Level designation.
- Gains over two years for subgroups including Economically Disadvantaged and LEP also outpaced the expected growth.
- English I gains were correlated with improved ratings on the Written Composition assessments, where the percentage of students scoring 6-8 (out of 8) improved from 30% to 43%.

## Expert Questions and Recommendations

What questions do our experts have for the authors?

- Were the differences in scores statistically significantly different from each other, year over year?
- How did the gains in this district compare to other districts in the state, on the same test?
- How did scores differ between schools with more use or more intensive use and other schools?

What suggestions do our experts have for next steps?

- An experimental study with a control group or a quasi-experimental study with a comparison should be conducted to estimate the magnitude of effect for NoRedInk.
- Contextualize the results of the treatment district with gains from other districts in the state or state-wide trends.
- Analysis methods that include controlling for covariates, even at the school level, would be a rigorous approach for this type of correlational study.



## LXD Research ESSA Evidence Review

Students Raise STAAR Scores in English with NoRedInk

Evidence guidance under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are designed to ensure that states, districts, and schools can identify programs, practices, products, and policies that work across various populations.

LXD Research determined that this study meets the Promising criteria for NoRedInk in grades 7-12 according to Every Student Success Act (ESSA) levels of evidence provided by the U.S. Department of Education guidelines for the following reasons:

### Rationale for Promising ESSA Level 3

- ✓ Project components that align with the [WWC Practice Guide: Teaching Secondary Students Writing](#)
- ✓ A correlational pre-test and post-test examination of student writing scores using a standardized measure
- ✓ Feedback from educators and school leaders that aligns with the relationship between product use and higher scores

What would have been needed for What Works Clearinghouse to have approved this study as Moderate evidence?

- The use of an experimental or quasi-experimental design, which included a comparison group.
- Reported results would need to have been clustered within schools and/or classes in the analysis.

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Dr. Rachel Schechter founded Learning Experience Design (LXD) Research and is an Edtech Trendsetter Award honoree for her contributions to the edtech industry. An international speaker and writer on literacy product efficacy, Dr. Schechter has published research for companies including Lexia, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Engage2Learn, Hatch Early Learning, Labster, and 95 Percent Group. Dr. Schechter has a Master's in Education from Harvard University and a Ph.D. in Child Development from Tufts University. Leading LXD Research, her team's guidance boosts the capacity for education leaders to buy research-proven products and edtech company leaders to measure, communicate, and accelerate learning outcomes for students of all abilities.

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Nathaniel Hansford is a teacher of 11 years, with a specialty in reading and in special education. He is the author of *The Scientific Principles of Reading Instruction* and *The Scientific Principles of Teaching*. He is the lead writer and editor for the popular education websites *Pedagogy Non Grata* and *Teaching by Science*. Nathaniel Hansford has conducted almost three dozen case studies and multiple large meta-analyses, including the largest meta-analysis on phonics instruction in the last 10 years and the only large-scale meta-analysis on reading comprehension that controlled for measurement type. He is passionate about making academic research accessible for teachers.



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