



A ReadTheory Story

Using Gamification and Positive Reinforcement to Raise Student Reading Levels



Michael Doherty

🎓 Kensington High School

📍 Madrid, Spain

👤 User since 2018



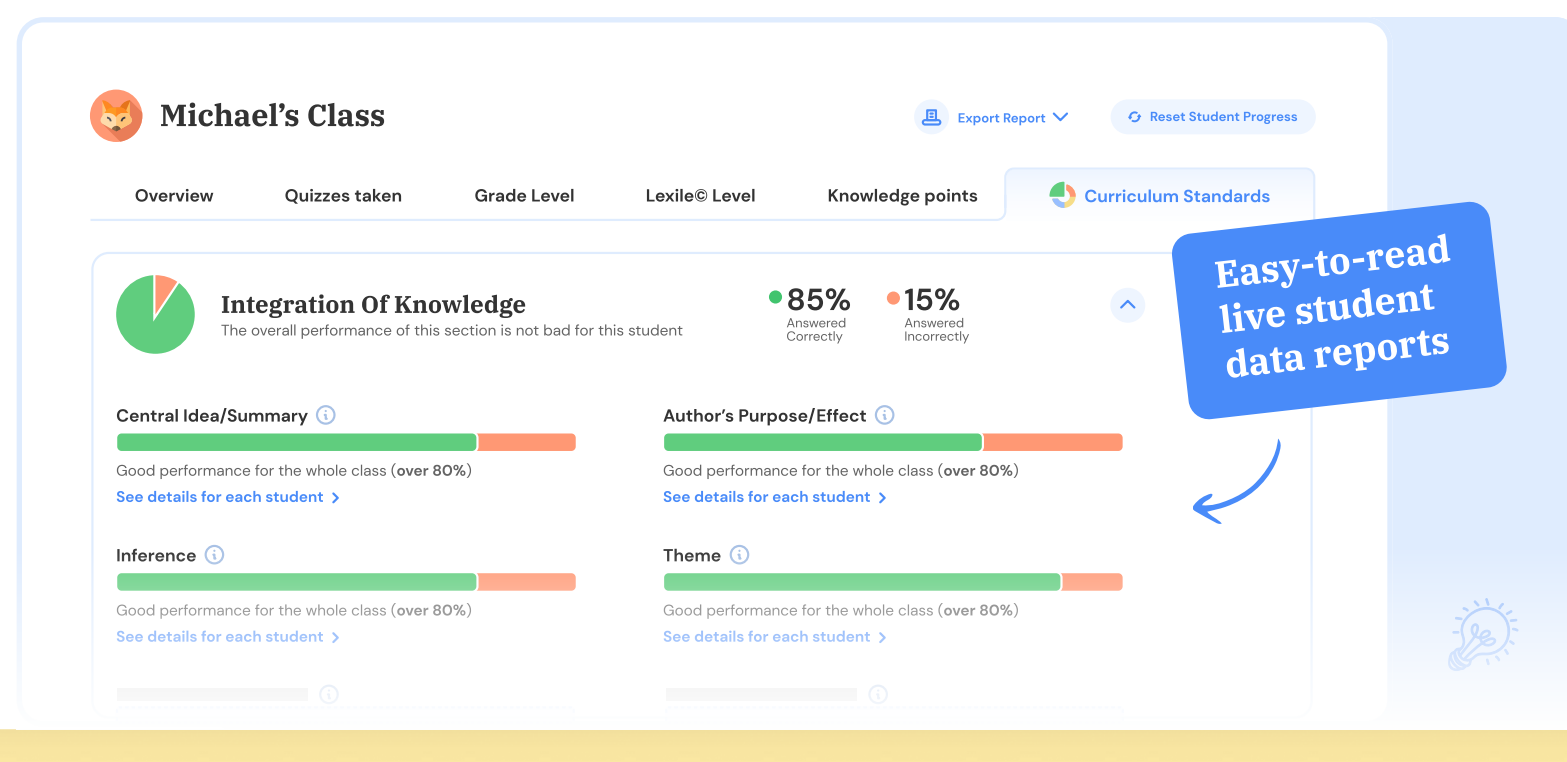
The Challenge



Teaching English as a second language, Michael needed a way to reach students who were at varying levels of comprehension. He wanted to diversify his instruction with digital content. He also wanted to increase student engagement and raise student self-esteem.

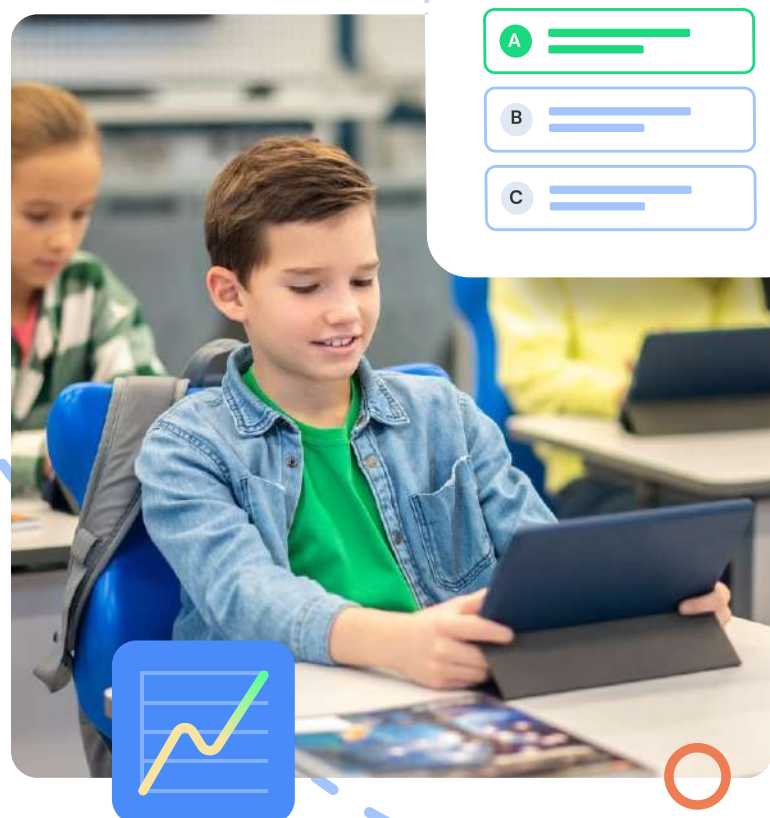
Michael's challenge was how to bring digital content to his existing classes so that it enhanced his lessons and made the students thrive. He researched several programs but struggled to find one that was easy to implement and fun for students to use, and still checked off the boxes of the school's curriculum requirements.

I teach English Language Learners at a high school in Spain. In six months, my 4°ESO class of 15-year-olds has gone from reading at a late year 5 level to a late year 6 level, which is very impressive as it is the reading grade level of a native-speaking child. I show them that data and they feel like ReadTheory is really working. It is fantastic and I recommend it!



The Solution

Michael first heard about ReadTheory from a colleague and decided to experiment with its usability and observe his students' reactions to it. He wanted to know if using it would result in a meaningful change in the classroom dynamics.



Given the criteria from the school, Michael realized that he could use ReadTheory to check for comprehension as it related to certain standards. He could use the automated data to justify comments he made about student improvement.

Students started on different levels based on the pretest results, but he soon saw that they all showed progress at their own pace. He periodically showed his classes how they improved as a unit. His students were more engaged than ever. Michael says, "ReadTheory passages are like stepping-stones towards language acquisition while culturally expanding the lives of my students at the same time."

Since arriving in Spain, Michael has trialed ReadTheory in three other schools and students were able to use it both inside and outside the classroom. The first three schools had one-on-one devices for students. In his current school, students can visit the computer lab to work on ReadTheory or use the school's tablets.



The Impact

In his previous school, Michael's students became so invested in ReadTheory that they came in 4th out of 1,097 schools in the 2022 worldwide competition where students were required to read passages and answer questions in order to earn points. He says the gamification aspect of the program has really gotten students excited about reading. It prepares them to be active learners and to take responsibility for their own learning.



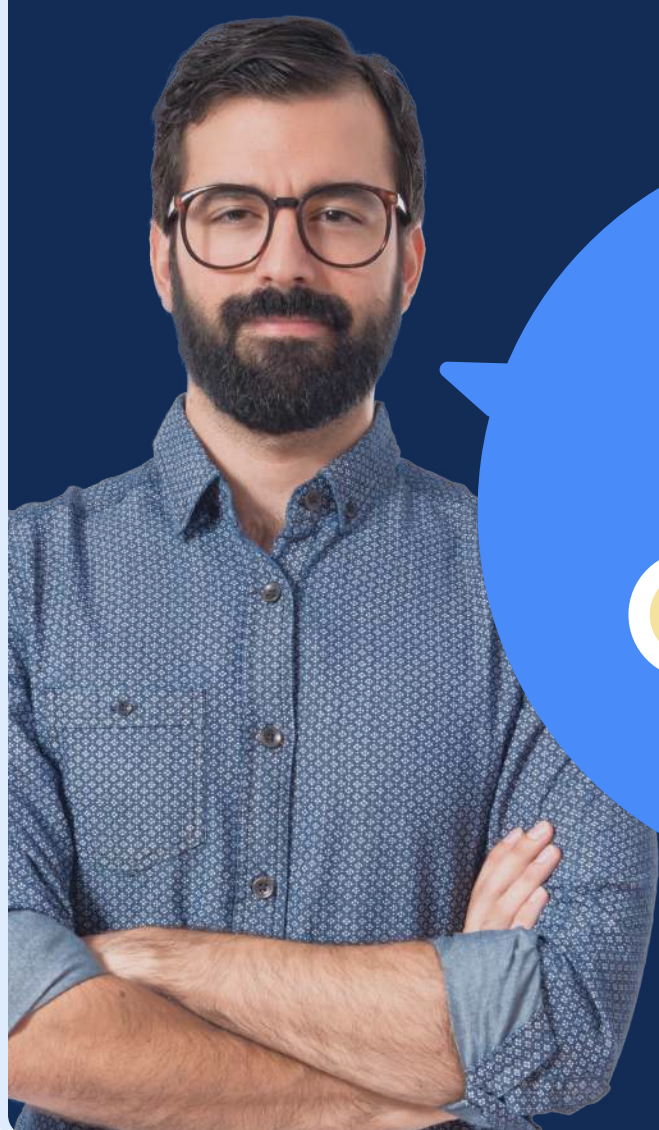
Since the pandemic, he sees that teachers are away from class more frequently and a great advantage is that the absent teacher can set ReadTheory passages for any class quite easily. Michael believes that "ReadTheory is an excellent tool if you need to quickly set work for a class. It just works."

Having a dynamic teaching style, Michael is on his feet a lot, checking comments, and praising or redirecting students. He has found that scheduling time for ReadTheory during the school day is effective because it gives him a chance to step back, focus on certain students, and evaluate the next steps for lesson planning.

Another point Michael brings up is that cheating has been virtually eliminated when students work on ReadTheory, as each student is working on a different passage. This heterogeneous instruction gives students the ability to excel in their own learning pathways.

Michael says even when students start off, sometimes perhaps a little hesitant about using ReadTheory, they are soon excited to see they've actually improved. He says that he shows them their auto-generated data and they say, "You were right—I *have* improved!"

Michael is hoping to level up ReadTheory usage by getting his whole school on board soon!



Help us write the next chapter!

If you've been using ReadTheory in your class and have a story to tell, we want to hear it!

[Share your story!](#)