

# Pearson Efficacy and Quality

## INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL 136, CHARLES O. DEWEY BROOKLYN, NEW YORK



### KEY FINDINGS

Intermediate School 136 (IS 136), Charles O. Dewey, a middle school in Brooklyn, New York, implemented iLit in spring 2013 in its self-contained English Language Arts classrooms. Between spring 2013 and spring 2014, the percentage of students with disabilities scoring a Level 2 or higher on the New York State Common Core English Language Arts Test increased by 7 percentage points, more than five times the growth of students with disabilities statewide. The percentage of students at the school earning an Advanced on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) grew by 15 percentage points, while the percentage of students scoring Advanced in the state grew by 1 point during the same timeframe.

### STUDY SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS<sup>1</sup>

IS 136 is a public school for Grades 6–8. It is part of the New York City Department of Education, which is the largest school district in the U.S., serving 1.1 million students in over 1,800 schools.

In the 2013–2014 school year, 491 students enrolled in IS 136. The school has a predominantly Hispanic population (87%) and most of the student population meets the criteria for being classified as economically disadvantaged (97%). The school also has a high percentage (43%) of English Language Learners (ELLs). The percentage of students with disabilities at the school is 25%.

Pearson's Efficacy and Quality team interviewed the school's principal, Mr. Eric Sackler, and two teachers who use iLit, Ms. Harriet Hoffman, ELL Coordinator/Lead Teacher/English as a Second Language (ESL) Coach; and Mr. Radha Alwa, English Language Arts (ELA) teacher, about the implementation. Pearson analyzed publicly available data—including state assessment scores. No personally identifying student information was requested, accepted, or reported at any time in the study.

### GOALS

IS 136 implemented iLit in spring 2013 in its self-contained ELA classrooms to support students who were struggling in reading and ELA. The goal was to move students toward on-level instruction and help them to be successful in meeting the expectations of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The school also sought a method for teachers to monitor their students' learning and growth.

### RESULTS AND DATA<sup>2</sup>

New York State first administered the Common Core English Language Arts Test in spring 2013, the same year as the iLit implementation at IS 136. Students are scored as being at Level 1, 2, 3, or 4 on the ELA Test, with Level 4 being the highest. A score of Level 2 or above is required for graduation.

The percentage of students with disabilities at IS 136 scoring at Level 2 or above on the ELA Test increased by 7 points from 2013 to 2014, while the percentage of students with disabilities in Grades 6–8 in NY State scoring at Level 2 or above increased by 1.3 points (Figure 1).

<sup>1</sup><http://schools.nyc.gov>

<sup>2</sup><https://reportcards.nysed.gov/>

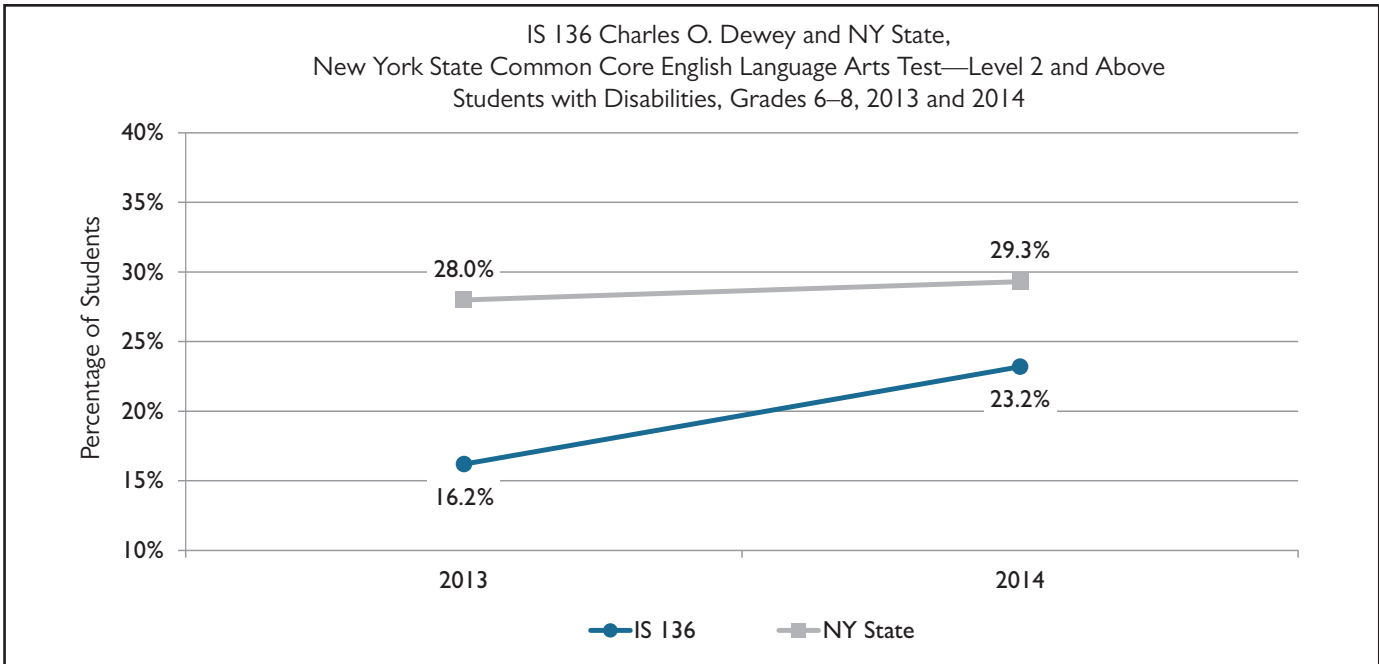


Figure 1: The percentage of students with disabilities at IS 136 and in NY State earning a Level 2 or above on the ELA exam in 2013 and 2014. Note: NY State includes scores from IS 136.

Because many of the students using iLit are also ELLs, the school administration uses the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) as another measure of growth in English language skills. Between 2013 and 2014, the percentage of ELLs with disabilities at IS 136 who achieved an Advanced on the NYSESLAT (the highest level before a student is no longer required to receive ESL services) increased by 15 points from 47.5% in 2013 to 62.5% in 2014 (Figure 2).

This increase was more than the percentage increase of ELLs with disabilities in NY State who achieved an Advanced on NYSESLAT in the same timeframe. The percentage of these ELLs in NY State who earned Advanced grew 1 point, from 43.2% in 2013 to 44.2% in 2014. Ms. Hoffman reported, “We believe that iLit and the modifications that we made contributed to this growth (in NYSESLAT).”

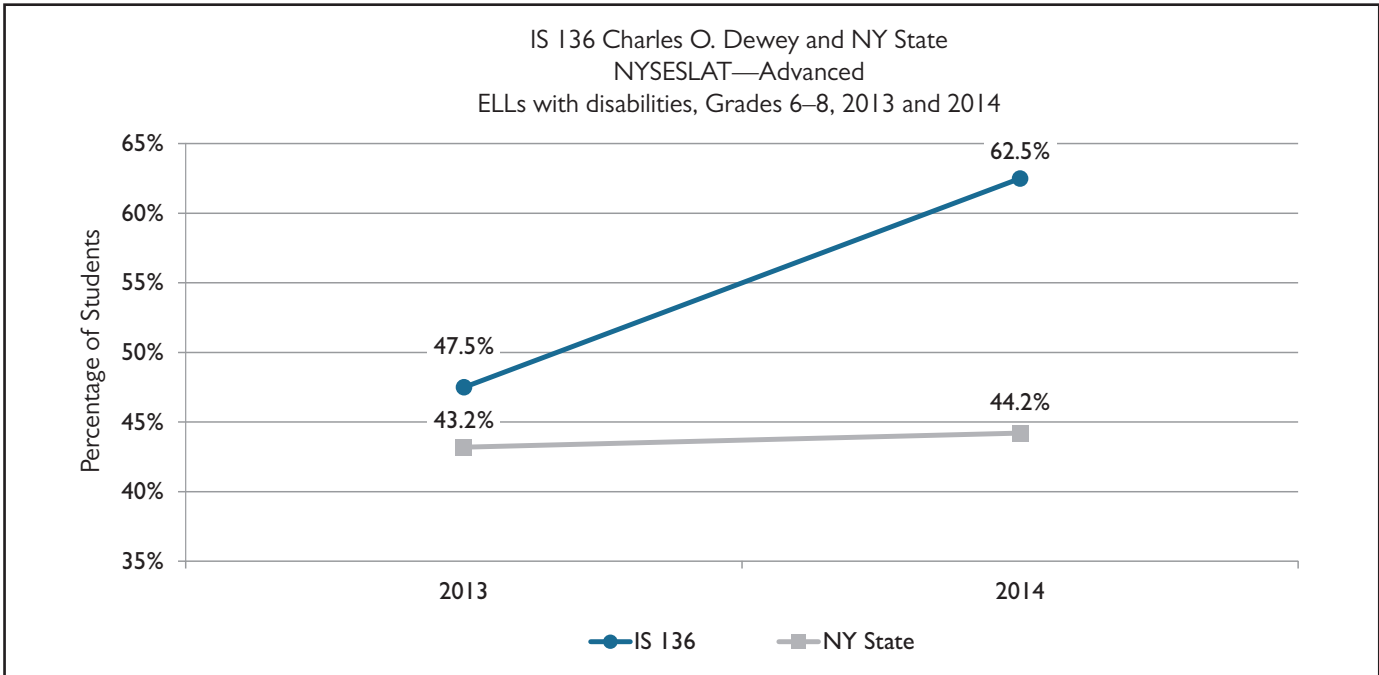


Figure 2: The percentage of ELLs with disabilities at IS 136 and in NY State who scored Advanced on NYSESLAT in 2013 and 2014.

## Implementation

Key features of the iLit implementation at IS 136 are:

- Daily and distinct time for independent reading, with a selection from iLit’s online library
- Daily use of iLit
- Each student uses the same iPad every day
- Use of data to inform instruction
- Training and support from a Pearson consultant once a month
- A cloud-based iLit setup with the district’s technical support

The school implemented iLit as the core curriculum in its self-contained ELA classrooms to target its special needs students. These classes generally contain 10–15 students and are designed with enhanced support for learning. Many students in these classes are also ELLs. Students in the program often have diverse abilities and the range of students using iLit is wide, which can make teaching particularly challenging.

Mr. Alwa begins each class with approximately 15 minutes of independent reading. The teachers identify students’ areas of strength and weakness from the formative assessments in iLit. “We saw growth almost across the board in the formative assessments. The results correlated to what we saw daily in the classroom,” said Mr. Alwa. Based on the specific needs of their students, Mr. Alwa and Ms. Hoffman often modify how they implement iLit.

## Ongoing Professional Development

A Pearson consultant works with the self-contained classroom once a month to support the teaching and learning. Mr. Alwa and Ms. Hoffman attend PLCs with the other teachers in the ELA department to discuss different learning strategies. The two teachers meet informally, daily, as they work together.

## Technology

Every classroom at IS 136 has a laptop cart. The computer labs and library have iMacs for students to use. The school also has iPad minis, which are shared among the classrooms. There are enough iPads for three classrooms to be 1:1 at any given time. Mr. Alwa’s classroom is a 1:1 classroom and each student uses the same iPad every day for iLit instruction. Students access iLit on their iPads through the district’s cloud-based system. For whole class instruction, all classrooms have a projector and SMART board.

## TEACHER AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

“iLit provides a framework so the students know what to expect, which is helpful for me. We all know what the format is going to be, so little explanation is needed. It also helps me to stay organized.” said Mr. Alwa. According to Principal Sackler, the IS 136 ELA staff uses the data that iLit provides to confirm what they see in the classroom. He reported that “iLit is a tool that quantifies what we’re observing. It’s good to have that evidence and confirmation that we are on the right track with our students.”

Both Mr. Alwa and Ms. Hoffman reported that their students responded positively to iLit’s online reading selections and the variety of books. They also found the Essential Questions that relate to the readings to be helpful in engaging classroom discussions about the literature. They said students appreciate receiving feedback from a source other than their teacher. The process of submitting their writing to iLit, automatically receiving a score and feedback, revising their work, and seeing their scores improve, was cited as motivating for students and fostered their independence. “iLit keeps the students’ attention and they like to interact with the iPad and take the surveys. It’s been helpful,” reported Mr. Alwa.

## CONCLUSION

Since implementing iLit, IS 136 has made progress toward its goals of monitoring students’ learning and moving students in self-contained classrooms closer to meeting the expectations of the CCSS and achievement in ELA. IS 136 increased its percentage of students with disabilities scoring Level 2 or above on the NY State ELA Test by 7 percentage points between 2013 and 2014. The percentage of ELLs with disabilities at the school earning an Advanced on the NYSESLAT grew by 15 percentage points during the same timeframe. On both measures, IS 136 students showed greater growth than demographically comparable students in NY State.