

# Arroyo Grande High School

## Lucia Mar Unified School District, Arroyo Grande, California

**Location type:** Small city

**District enrollment:** 10,634 students

**School enrollment:** 2,206 students

**Percentage of students at school eligible for free and reduced price meals:** 39

### Key Takeaways

Arroyo Grande High School (AGHS) was a participant in the pilot of the OECD Test for Schools in 2012. The school's results from the pilot showed that 29 percent of students at Arroyo Grande performed below Level 2 in reading, 39 percent in math, and 20 percent in science. This was concerning, as longitudinal research shows that students who score below Level 2 face a disproportionately higher risk of poor participation in post-secondary education or low labor-market outcomes at age 19, and even worse outcomes occur at age 21. (OECD, 2010e)

### Actions Taken

In response to these results, AGHS took significant action, including the following:

- ✓ The school revised its formative assessments to provide a greater focus on developing students' literacy skills. Across the curricula, assessments now contain more writing opportunities rather than multiple choice questions.
- ✓ The school also focused on helping teachers understand how to embed critical thinking skills into classroom instruction. Teachers have used a variety of tactics to embed critical thinking activities into the classroom, with particular attention paid to strategies promoted by Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). Opportunities for rich discussion among students, coupled with group engagement work like Philosophical Chairs and Socratic Seminar, where students discuss their views on a given topic, have increased critical thinking in the classroom.
- ✓ The school also put in place a school-wide focus on critical reading and writing, which included the use of rubrics by each department to help teachers assess and support students' progress.
- ✓ In addition, AGHS shifted its school schedule to allow for more professional learning time for teachers. The new school schedule provides Late Start Mondays every week for teachers, when teachers work in collaborative groups to focus on student data, collaboratively plan lessons, and identify areas for remediation and acceleration as needed.
- ✓ Finally, AGHS attended the 2013 and 2014 Global Learning Network (GLN) national convenings, using these as opportunities to dig deeper into their results and share best practices with peers.

These changes have certainly paid off. Between the 2012 pilot and the 2014-2015 administration of the OECD Test for Schools, the percentage of students performing below level 2 decreased by 15 percent in reading, 9 percent in math, and 9 percent in science, while the proportion of students performing at the highest proficiency levels rose in all three subjects.

***Those wishing to learn more about the practices at Arroyo Grande High School may visit the school's website [here](#).***