



# Managing Budget Cuts

Cost-Effective Instruction, Assessment and Math Intervention

## ICEF VISTA FAST FACTS

- Public charter elementary school
- Title 1 school
- 84% Eligible for free or reduced price lunch
- 80% English Language Learners
- 80% Hispanic or Latino
- 11% African American
- 3% Filipino
- 3% White

## DREAMBOX IMPLEMENTATION

- Deployed since 2010
- 279 K–5 students
- 35 minutes of daily instruction
- Special education
- Intervention
- Enrichment

## ABOUT DREAMBOX LEARNING

DreamBox Learning's Intelligent Adaptive Learning™ program accelerates student learning by ensuring every student works continually in their optimal learning zone and helps all students achieve math proficiency.

### → CHALLENGE:

20 percent budget cut forces midyear staff reductions

The Inner City Education Foundation (ICEF) has earned national recognition for providing students with excellent academic options in the South Los Angeles community. ICEF Vista Elementary Academy serves 300 mostly low-income students, nearly 80 percent of whom are English Language Learners (ELLs). In the fall of 2010, as part of significant state cuts to educational funding, ICEF learned it would need to reduce its overall budget by 20 percent.

ICEF Vista Principal Ryan Gomez recalls that the school lost three teachers and two instructional assistants in quick succession. "Our transition happened over the course of two days," he says. "We quickly had to adjust our classrooms and teaching model to serve four classrooms at each grade level with just three teachers."

**"Students at ICEF Vista are moving from basic to proficient and proficient to advanced. DreamBox has been a key component of that."**

— Ryan Gomez, Principal  
ICEF Vista Elementary

### → SOLUTION:

Adopting adaptive instructional technology and a new model for education

As the primary means for overcoming reduced credentialed teaching positions, ICEF Vista adopted a model developed by Rocketship Education to move beyond the one-teacher, one-classroom model found in most of the nation's elementary schools. It's an approach where students develop basic skills through daily individualized online instruction in a "Learning Lab" — and one that enables classroom teachers to focus on critical-thinking, building rich classroom experiences, and providing extra help to kids who are struggling. With a reduced teaching staff, ICEF Vista needed an instructional program that would provide intervention for students lacking basic foundational skills (such as simple addition and subtraction) and struggling to gain automaticity with basic calculations. ICEF Vista also needed a program that would differentiate instruction based on student comprehension.

The school selected DreamBox Learning, an intelligent, adaptive online math program, to build student conceptual understanding and fluency and to differentiate instruction for students of all abilities. Principal Gomez says that in addition to helping students develop basic foundational methods and higher order thinking, DreamBox has had a positive impact on students'

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perceptions of their own abilities in math. “DreamBox is engaging and makes math approachable,” he says. “As a result, students are showing more confidence in their math skills.”

### → IMPLEMENTATION:

#### Online instruction and continuous assessment for every student, every day

As part of the time students spend daily in the ICEF Vista Learning Lab, key concepts are reinforced both in small-group centers and through DreamBox’s self-paced instructional software. “Every single student goes into the Learning Lab every day,” says Gomez. “On average, they’re spending 35 minutes daily on DreamBox.”

Gomez and his team analyze the data that DreamBox provides and tie it to instruction. “DreamBox helps us pinpoint where students are struggling and where teachers can reinforce instruction,” he says. He notes it is impacting caseloads as well. “Our intervention specialist gets more impactful face-to-face time as a result of her use of DreamBox. Not only does DreamBox provide data in terms of those kids in need of intervention, it’s relieved some of the after-school tutoring that was necessary in the past.”

### → RESULTS:

#### More structured interventions and increased math proficiency

“Before DreamBox arrived, intervention was taking place but it was primarily focused on addressing language issues,” says Gomez. “Today, we’re moving beyond strictly language to include mathematics proficiency, and it’s because of DreamBox’s intervention capabilities.” But Gomez says its benefits are not limited to only students in need of intervention. “It truly is adaptable. Not only do we utilize it for intervention (or special education) and with our students with special needs, but also to help those students who are demonstrating advanced progress. Due to the individual pacing of the program, students work at their own level and speed, which allows their personal needs to be met.”

Since 80 percent of students at ICEF Vista are ELLs, it was especially important for Principal Gomez to ensure that the technology program used in the Learning Lab was accessible to students with limited English. Gomez recalls, “Many of our early elementary ELL students lacked basic foundational math skills. I wasn’t initially sure how well they would work with DreamBox, but I’ve found DreamBox to be a truly self-guided tutor.

The DreamBox interface, with its graphics and large print, really lends itself to ELLs. It’s not intimidating in any way, and it’s kid friendly.” Gomez says students get the support they need without even realizing it. “In their minds, they’re playing a game, but in reality, they’re getting the tools and skills they need to succeed in math.”

Historically, ICEF’s second- and third-grade students didn’t possess the fundamental math skills to move on to pre-algebra. Today, DreamBox is helping them increase their conceptual understanding. Principal Gomez says “The majority of my fourth and fifth graders are now either proficient or advanced. Students at ICEF Vista are moving from basic to proficient and proficient to advanced. DreamBox has been a real key component of that.”

Following a difficult year of budget cuts and change, Gomez says the feedback he’s received about DreamBox and the work being done in the Learning Lab has been overwhelmingly positive. He says, “We feel fortunate that we have an opportunity to share DreamBox with our kids. It’s been a blessing.”

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