

Differentiated Learning Based on Individual Data in Oologah, Oklahoma

Oologah Upper Elementary School, Oologah, OK



Kendra Adkins
Principal at Oologah Upper
Elementary School



378 students
Grades 3 to 5



Exact Path



39% economically
disadvantaged
3.3% ELLs
18% special education

The Challenge:

Oologah Upper Elementary School (OUE) in Oologah-Talala School District serves the rural community of Oologah, Oklahoma, which is located about 30 miles northeast of Tulsa. One way that educators at OUE wanted to improve instruction and student outcomes was by expanding the way they gathered data about their students and then using the data to differentiate instruction.

“The initial idea was to help differentiate skills within the classroom—less of a kind of a guessing game, which differentiation can often be if you don’t have some good data to pull from,” explained Kendra Adkins, principal of OUE.

To address this challenge, educators at OUE began using Edmentum Exact Path, Edmentum’s K–12 adaptive assessment and personalized instruction program, to give educators easy access to the data and differentiation resources they needed.

Educators at Oologah Upper Elementary School were looking for a way to effectively differentiate instruction in the classroom to meet the needs of all students. To address this challenge, the school implemented Edmentum Exact Path. Now, teachers feel confident that they truly understand students and can address their strengths and weaknesses.

How They Did It:

When Ms. Adkins became principal in 2018, OUE educators had been using Exact Path for a year, with some educators utilizing it more than others. Under Ms. Adkins’ leadership, Exact Path became a daily part of instruction, with all students using the program for at least 20 minutes each day during station rotation time or in the computer lab. Because students worked in the program consistently, teachers were able to use the data to inform small-group instruction.

“If they were teaching a grade-level skill, they might go in and find that skill in Exact Path and use the features of the program to help them form their small groups,” explained Ms. Adkins. “Or, if as they were looking over the data, they would find that they had a portion of their students on the same skill, they might find an extra time for a little extra instruction on that one.”

To motivate students, OUE educators set goals for the number of Trophies, which denote mastery of a skill in Exact Path, that students need to earn. They decided that one Trophy per week for math and one per week for reading was an appropriate goal for most students, but the educators also recognized that those goals may need to be modified for students who were either struggling or excelling.

“We learned that the process has to be very flexible,” said Ms. Adkins. “If we had a student that was just really picking it up, we would increase the goal and really try to challenge that child to meet a higher goal. And, we had other students that the one [Trophy] a week was just not going to happen, so we tried to set goals that were realistic and challenging for that student but were also motivating and not going to be another thing that they felt like they could fail.”

Educators meet every two weeks and discuss each student’s performance relative to his or her goals and then come up with an action plan for each student’s progression. The action plan is then shared with parents via a phone call, an email, or a message or in person.

“This is also a way that parents can get on board and help because they can work on [Exact Path] from home too,” explained Ms. Adkins. “Parents can really get an idea of what it is they are doing and how it works, and they can help them earn those Trophies.”

Classroom teachers aren’t the only ones using Exact Path at OUE. Exact Path is one of the data sources that the reading specialist uses to determine what skills to focus on with her students. She reviews the learning paths of the students in her groups to look for the common skills that they need and builds lessons around those. For some skills, she also uses the assignments feature in Exact Path to assign specific content based on what she is teaching and uses the results to see who needs additional support.



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Success:

OUE educators are already seeing positive results from using Exact Path. Educators are able to provide differentiated instruction, and students are improving.

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Meeting students at their level is not only important for struggling students but also for high-achieving students.

"Exact Path forced [my son] to start to develop some of that inner grit that was not very strong in him because everything has always been really easy for him in school," reported Ms. Adkins. "And, we saw that with a lot of our higher-end kids. . . . The academic portion aside, they started to develop a strong work ethic and some of that inner determination that they were going to learn some really hard concepts. And, I think that was as big of a win in my book as an educator and as a mom, as anything academic."

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The Future:

Oologah Upper Elementary School educators plan to continue to use Exact Path in their classrooms as they work to support individual student growth. Using the program has also provided an additional benefit. It has helped educators feel that they really know their students and has given them the peace of mind that every child has been getting what he or she needed.

"I had a teacher of over 20 years, a veteran teacher, say, ‘I’ve never known my kids like I know them now,’” said Ms. Adkins. “From gathering this data [and] looking at the data, they really got a clear sense of what their kids understood and what they didn’t. They liked it, and I think it took a huge load off their shoulders.”

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