

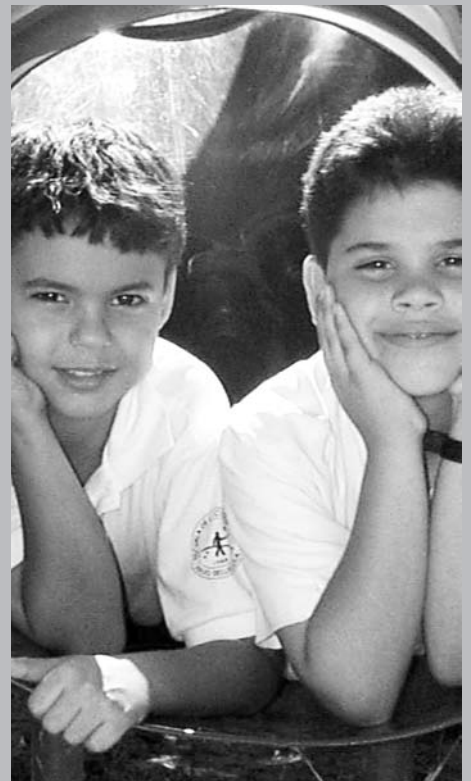


Todos a leer con PLATO® Achieve Now Aligns with Federal Legislation

If language-minority children arrive at school with no proficiency in English but speaking a language for which there are instructional guides, learning materials, and locally available proficient teachers, these children should be taught how to read in their native language while acquiring oral proficiency in English and subsequently taught to extend their skills to reading in English. (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

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Real learning. Real results.™

Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now is a researched-based program developed to help teachers of ELLs meet the requirements of NCLB.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is the landmark education reform law designed to change the culture of America's schools by closing the achievement gap, offering more flexibility, giving parents more options, and emphasizing what works based on scientific research. Under NCLB's strong accountability provisions, states must describe how they will close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), achieve academic proficiency. In addition, they must produce annual state and school district report cards that inform parents and communities about state and school progress. Schools that do not make progress must provide supplemental services, such as free tutoring or after-school assistance, take corrective action, and if still not making adequate yearly progress after five years, must make dramatic changes to the way the school is run.

NCLB legislation also established the Reading First initiative whose goal is to ensure that all children can read at or above grade level by the end of third grade. Reading First places specific emphasis on the importance of scientifically based reading research—research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties (Texas Education Agency, 2003, p. 12). Other key elements of Reading First include classroom-focused instruction, professional development for teachers using scientifically based reading programs and practices, and accountability through ongoing classroom-based assessment. The Reading First grant program also provides funds to help state and local school agencies eliminate reading deficits through research-based comprehensive reading programs.

Scientifically Research-Based Reading Program

Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now is a research-based program, developed to help teachers of ELLs meet the requirements of NCLB. It is consistent in design with the recommendations cited in the National Research Council Report (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) as it relates to initial reading instruction for students who come to school speaking a language other than English. That report states that “there is evidence that initial reading instruction in a child's home language (e.g., Spanish) makes a positive contribution to literacy attainment (both in the home language and in English) and, presumably, to the prevention of reading

difficulties” (p. 339). Thus, one of the recommendations in that report is that “if language minority children arrive at school with no proficiency in English but speaking a language for which there are instructional guides, learning materials, and locally available proficient teachers, these children should be taught how to read in their native language while acquiring oral proficiency in English and subsequently taught to extend their skills to reading in English” (p. 325). Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now is also consistent with a growing body of evidence that points to the vital role of native-language literacy (Ada, 1993; Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Macedo, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999; Thomas and Collier, 1997–1998) in educating the whole child, enabling the student to express all the creativity and wide range of skills, talents, and prior knowledge that he or she brings to the classroom door.

Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now supports the development of Spanish language literacy skills by providing materials that cover key objectives in emergent literacy, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. As the research suggests, “learning to read for meaning depends on understanding the language and referents of the text to be read” (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, p. 324). “Giving a child initial reading instruction in a language that he or she does not yet speak thus can undermine the child’s chance to see literacy as a powerful form of communication, by knocking the support of meaning out from underneath the process of learning” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 237). It is no wonder that the number one predictor of success in English reading for ELLs is the level of success they acquire in their first language. For the majority of ELL students in the United States, that means literacy in Spanish.

Instruction, content, and strategies in Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now have been developed using the most current, scientifically based reading research for ELLs. This intervention program offers proven literacy instruction with a focus on two of the essential components of reading that must be included in a comprehensive core program—vocabulary and comprehension. Vocabulary is taught directly and indirectly before, during, and after reading. Comprehension is achieved through the teaching of specific strategies, such as summarization.

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Empirical evidence has shown that children who are dominant in a language other than English acquire academic language and literacy skills rapidly and to a greater extent, in both the native language and English, when they attain literacy proficiency in their first language.

Research on Literacy in the Native Language—Spanish

For Spanish-speaking elementary school students, literacy instruction in their native language is the most pedagogically sound way of learning about the relationship between meaning and print in both Spanish and English (Pardo & Tinajero, 2000). Empirical evidence has shown that Spanish-dominant youngsters acquire English when they have attained literacy proficiency in their mother tongue (Krashen, 2000; Krashen & Biber, 1988; Ramirez, Yuen & Ramey, 1991; Thomas and Collier, 1997). Substantial research has shown that “the fastest route to second language literacy is through the first language” (Krashen & Biber, 1988, p. 22). Empirical evidence has shown that children who are dominant in a language other than English acquire academic language and literacy skills rapidly and to a greater extent, in both the native language and English, when they attain literacy proficiency in their first language. A number of researchers (Cummins, 1989; Krashen & Biber, 1988; Lanauze & Snow, 1989; Collier, 1995) have found that instruction in the students’ native language simultaneously promotes the development of literacy skills in both the native language and a second language. Thus, time invested in developing first-language literacy works to the advantage of second-language literacy achievement.

The linguistic interdependence principle (Cummins, 1989) asserts that certain processes are basic to reading and that once learned they can be applied to reading in almost any language (Krashen & Biber, 1988; Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991). Specifically, when children learn about the intricacies of print relationships through materials that highlight their own language and social reality, the linguistic interdependence principle predicts that they will be able to extend their repertoire of literacy expertise into a range of language and social contexts in their second language (Pardo & Tinajero, 2000). Children reading in Spanish, for example, are actively involved in a highly selective, multifaceted process which is identical to the mental process used to read in English. The skills needed to read well in Spanish are also needed to read well in English. Therefore, children who learn to read well in their native language will not need to totally relearn these skills to read in English. Learning to read in the native language is beneficial because students apply many of the skills and strategies they acquired in their native language to reading in English (Tinajero & Hurley, 1997). A high level of proficiency in the native language leads to accelerated cognitive growth and hence to positive academic outcomes in the second language (Cummins, 1989; Collier, 1995).

In keeping with these findings, we contend that instruction in Spanish reading helps limited or non-English speakers appreciate their linguistic heritage, develop positive literacy experiences, and attain competence in both academic Spanish and English. In contrast, excluding the native language from students' instructional program or minimizing its use in classroom pedagogy may seriously reduce the learning options for Spanish-dominant children as compared with those of their English-dominant peers (Tinajero & Munter, 2004).

There is no question that students who arrive as immigrants in this country must learn English. They cannot fully benefit from the schools until they are able to profit from instruction conducted primarily in this language. At the same time, a growing body of evidence points to the vital role of native-language literacy (e.g., Ada, 1993; Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Macedo, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999; Thomas & Collier, 1997–1998) in educating the whole child, enabling him or her to express all the creativity and wide range of skills, talents, and prior knowledge that he or she brings to the classroom door.

While further research on this timely topic is yet to be conducted, these findings provide strong preliminary evidence that academic literacy skills acquired in the mother tongue will transfer positively to English if they are sufficiently developed in the native language. Data from the studies cited here also suggest that primary language instruction in literacy may be the most pedagogically sound method for helping Spanish-speaking children with limited English proficiency learn about the academic use of school English (Pardo and Tinajero, 2000). Moreover, as the National Reading Council report points out, “because being able to read and write in two languages confers numerous intellectual, cultural, economic, and social benefits, bilingualism and biliteracy should be supported whenever possible. To the extent possible, non-English-speaking children should have opportunities to develop literacy skills in their home language, as well as in English” (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, p. 324–325).

Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now provides teaching and learning tools to enhance instructional effectiveness in Spanish and facilitates the use of research-based teaching practices. The program supports classroom instruction for Spanish-speaking children and includes:

- Engaging, high-quality literature in Spanish written by Latino authors that enhances students' pride in their culture and boosts self-esteem;
- Art, stories, and characters that reflect a diverse Spanish culture;
- Instruction in two essential components of reading instruction identified by the National Reading Panel—vocabulary development and reading comprehension strategies;

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- Early literacy assessment tools that can be utilized to monitor an individual student's progress in vocabulary development and comprehension strategies, identify individual student needs, and help teachers select appropriate learning activities or instructional resources for independent student practice;
- Engaging, audio-supported, interactive lessons and materials for concept or skill development that can be used as additional instructional resources in whole-class, small-group, and individual tutorial settings; and
- Easily implemented multimedia, interactive student learning activities that use technology to facilitate individualized instruction and guided practice to support mastery of skills presented in small-group instruction.

Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now is a standards-based curriculum program used to target individual student needs. The curriculum resources allow the classroom teacher to integrate the program with existing reading curriculum. Materials include:

- interactive learning activities on the Vamos a explorar, El patio de abuela Adventure CD and accompanying teacher guide;
- an assessment book that includes progress checks, reading observational checklists, and a product correlation table;
- the Literacy Library with 20 unique titles (six copies of each);
- In-A-Flash cards with strategies for lesson planning and classroom integration; and
- a home activities learning booklet to promote parental involvement.

Literary Works

A relevant curriculum for Spanish-speaking students must be built on what students need to know, while honoring their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now provides students with excellent culturally relevant literature pieces. The Adventure CD, *Vamos a explorar*, *El patio de abuela*, includes three interactive fiction and three non-fiction readings that are leveled and connected to learning activities that build strategic thinking and metacognition. Content on the Adventure CD is extended and integrated into classroom activities included in the Teacher's Guide. *Vamos a explorar*, *El patio de abuela*, uses strong visual support to preview the selection's genre and the story elements or text features. The Teacher's Guide includes a "picture walk" to preview elements or main ideas.

The Literacy Library extends the program with 20 unique children's titles that represent authentic, multicultural literature that speaks to students' own lives and experiences. The Literacy Library includes six copies of each book that can be used for guided reading, independent reading, or home reading. The In-A-Flash cards provide curriculum support and outline explicit instructional strategies to build reading and writing skills that connect CD learning with the Literacy Library.

A relevant curriculum for Spanish-speaking students must be built on what students need to know, while honoring their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Reading First specifies that instruction be based upon the evidence of how children learn to read, which includes instruction in five essential components identified by the National Reading Panel—phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension.

Instruction

Reading First specifies that instruction be based upon the evidence of how children learn to read, which includes instruction in five essential components identified by the National Reading Panel—phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. The National Research Council's report (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998) states that an effective reading program must address a full array of instructional strategies and learning opportunities to help children become fluent readers.

Fortunately a substantial knowledge base on literacy instruction for non-native speakers has been developed by educators and researchers over the past two decades (Goldenberg and Gallimore, 1991; Goldenberg and Sullivan, 1994; Slavin and Madden, 1995). These studies include recommendations related to successful reading programs in Spanish for Spanish speakers in the United States. They have also yielded excellent instructional practices that emphasize structured phonological instruction combined with meaningful uses of print that teachers can use with confidence (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998).

Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now provides focused instruction in two of the five components—vocabulary development and reading comprehension. Through a combination of multimedia software, classroom and print materials, lesson plans, and daily practice, students are taught according to these two key components of reading. The instructional strategies and learning opportunities align and easily integrate with existing classroom reading programs. The program provides assessment options and supports targeted instruction and flexible grouping.

The two essential reading components are described below with examples of how each is addressed in Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now. The activities in this program are drawn from converging research evidence on the effectiveness of critical components to early reading success (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000). The instructional elements include: phonological awareness, fluent reading in a variety of texts, comprehension strategies and vocabulary development, decoding strategies, and word analysis. To support the development of emergent literacy skills, Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now provides students explicit instruction in these skills in addition to their regular classroom reading instruction. Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now is intended to be used as a supplement to the regular reading program providing additional practice in a motivational and highly interactive format.

Vocabulary Development

The National Reading Panel (2000) identifies oral vocabulary as key in making the transition from oral to written language. Because vocabulary knowledge is so closely tied to reading comprehension, students must develop a broad vocabulary base in order to be effective readers. When students encounter a large number of unknown words while they are reading, their comprehension is disrupted. Students may misinterpret a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire reading selection if they do not know the meaning of one or more key words. For this reason, it is extremely important for teachers to directly teach key vocabulary and provide opportunities for students to use this vocabulary orally and in writing (Tinajero, 2004).

With *Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now*, vocabulary development is enhanced through extensive experiences with words and concepts that are presented in isolation and within texts. Students have multiple opportunities to actively engage with new vocabulary and concepts. *Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now* provides direct instruction in the vocabulary required to comprehend text within the context of developmentally appropriate text. At early stages, basic vocabulary, presented visually, can be accessed with audio support. At more advanced stages, unknown words can be highlighted within text, and definitions can be viewed within a glossary to support understanding.

Reading Comprehension from L1 to L2

The purpose of reading is comprehension. Comprehension is deriving meaning from the printed page, and this process is closely tied to what readers know, including the language they speak and understand. For ELLs this means that starting the reading process in the language students speak and understand makes sense. Comprehension skills developed in the first language, Spanish, are universal and can be applied to English once children develop sufficient proficiency in that language. In bilingual classrooms, children develop literacy skills, including vocabulary and reading comprehension, most often in Spanish—their first language and the language they speak and understand—while acquiring oral proficiency in English. The process that readers use to make sense of text is a universal process. Whether students are reading in Spanish or Chinese, they use their background knowledge and the same linguistic cueing system and psychological strategies. ELLs are subsequently taught to extend their skills to reading in English. As Freeman and Freeman (2004) state, “even though there may be differences between the syntactic structures and the graphophonic systems of the two languages, these literate English learners bring important knowledge and skills to reading in English. They already

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know that reading should make sense and that they should apply their background knowledge as they read. They also know, at least subconsciously, that texts offer cues from three linguistic systems and that they can apply the same psychological strategies when they read in English that they rely on when reading in their first language” (Freeman and Freeman, NABE News, p. 9).

Comprehension Strategies

Knowledge about the various ways that text is organized for differing purposes and the ability to determine main ideas, supporting details, author’s purpose, and other strategies are essential for students who read to learn. Instruction in comprehension strategies must be guided by the findings of scientific research. These findings include the following recommendations:

- Comprehension instruction focused on strategies within the context of reading is most effective.
- Active involvement of motivated learners who reread to gain understanding is essential.
- Flexible, multiple-strategy instruction that is immediately applied by students is important.
- Specific strategies for understanding both narrative and expository text are needed for comprehension.
- Reading comprehension instruction begins before children read independently.
- Multiple assessments are needed within the classroom to provide feedback and to monitor progress in language development, strategy, and the application of knowledge.
- Effective assessments must enable teachers to interpret data and communicate results to students and parents.

Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now facilitates the implementation of these findings and introduces students to strategies that support comprehension of complex text. Ongoing monitoring, or self-regulation, during the reading process is essential to text comprehension. Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now stories include a guided reading character that provides students with a “think aloud” example to support comprehension and successful completion of the learning activities. In this way, strategic thinking and metacognition are encouraged. The learning activities and support materials assist students in developing systems for organizing and

understanding information from text. PLATO Learning technology provides guided and independent practice for students as they gain strategic reading skills. Classroom-based assessment is embedded in learning activities and extended to classroom formative assessments that provide immediate feedback for students and targeted, useful data for teachers.

Assessment

Reading First specifies that classroom instructional decisions be informed by scientifically based reading research. Local education agencies are required to show evidence of growth and improvement in the reading skills of first- through third-grade students. Reading First supports the implementation of classroom-based instructional reading assessments to identify which students are at risk of reading failure.

The goal of Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now is to move students to higher levels of literacy acquisition, while providing comprehensive, standards-based instruction in early literacy skills, comprehension, and vocabulary. This assessment design makes visible students' progress on the standards.

Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now provides tools that assist the teacher in making data-driven decisions and targeting instruction to meet students' needs. Classroom-based assessments are used to identify strengths and needs in reading development and to monitor progress throughout the school year. Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now provides classroom teachers with the tools necessary to assess student learning continuously. Easy-to-use assessment reports assist teachers in grouping students for instruction and monitoring progress toward instructional goals and mastery of state standards.

Classroom assessment tools included with the program help teachers make instructional decisions and provide evidence of student progress. These include a Reading Behaviors Checklist that allows teachers to continuously track student progress on observable behaviors best assessed within the context of student work. Progress Checks provide a quick check of student understanding and mastery of reading skills practiced on the interactive CD. Student self-assessment is intrinsic to the interactive learning activities. Portfolio Ideas are included in the curriculum support materials and provide additional authentic assessment opportunities.

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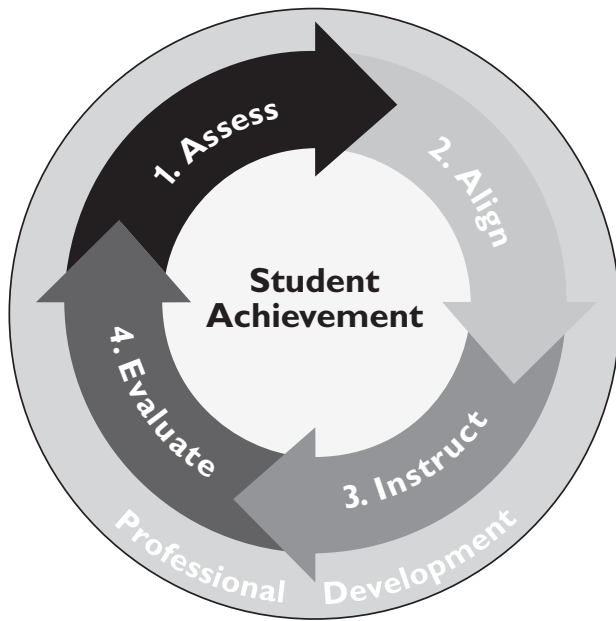
Parental Involvement

According to Tinajero and Munter (2004), "although the educational achievement of children from minority groups depends in part on what the schools do to help them, it is also clear that schools alone cannot win this battle" (p. 79). The most effective schools and educational programs recognize the vital roles of families' and communities' perceptions and responses to the cultural and language differences facing them and have developed effective and creative approaches to bridging the gaps through celebrating families' roles in the education process (Epstein, 2001). Thus, it is important to view parents as assets to the school program and welcome them as important partners in the education of their children. Parents have many talents and experiences. When we tap into these talents, a wealth of information can be shared. Parents can help children who are still developing literacy in their first language by reading and responding to journal entries. Parents can read books in their children's languages and tell stories from their oral traditions. When children see their parents providing valuable experiences for their peers, they not only feel a sense of pride but also share positive feelings about their language and culture.

Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now includes 35 copies of the Cuaderno de actividades para el hogar (home activities booklet) for teachers to share with parents. The booklet is in Spanish and contains printed versions of the stories included on the CD, follow-up questions to encourage a conversation between parents and children about the stories and new learning, numerous home activity ideas to extend learning into home, and Progress Charts to keep track of the learning activities completed.

Professional Development

The professional development provided to support Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now focuses on helping teachers—both Spanish proficient and non-Spanish speakers—promote literacy attainment, prevent reading difficulties, and tailor instruction to meet individual student needs. The PLATO® Student Achievement Model guides the implementation to ensure all instructional practices are aligned and target student success.



Assess

Starting with assessment, student information is collected and analyzed to identify instructional needs. The reading and writing observational checklists included in the Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now program help evaluate individual learning and mastery of developmentally staged reading and writing behaviors. Student data collected from mandated accountability assessments and other formative sources are also reviewed to determine the learning objectives that will have the greatest impact.

Align

PLATO Learning materials along with existing school resources for English Language Learners are considered and aligned to targeted learning objectives. Selected resources focus on developing reading comprehension in the student's native language (Spanish) while building oral proficiency in English.

The professional development provided to support Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now focuses on helping teachers—both Spanish proficient and non-Spanish speakers—promote literacy attainment, prevent reading difficulties, and tailor instruction to meet individual student needs.

The Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now program helps districts meet the requirements of NCLB and the Reading First initiative by supporting the implementation of high-quality, scientifically research-based reading instruction in Spanish in grades K–3.

Instruct

Research-based teaching practices focused on reading comprehension strategies are outlined in instructional plans. Ongoing formative assessments are linked to instruction to monitor student learning, guide instructional decision making, and enable teachers to employ flexible small-group strategies in the classroom.

Parental involvement is an important component of student success. Guidelines and materials to foster parent support of native language instruction and learning at home are shared with parents.

Evaluate

An evaluation plan is outlined at the beginning of the implementation that specifies the quantitative and qualitative formative and summative measures that will be used to evaluate student progress and program success. During the end-of-program review, improvement plans for the next implementation cycle are discussed.

The PLATO Learning team supports teachers throughout the implementation. The goal is to build the capacity of program stakeholders to sustain improvements in student achievement and establish new milestones.

Closing

The Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now program helps districts meet the requirements of NCLB and the Reading First initiative by supporting the implementation of high-quality, scientifically research-based reading instruction in Spanish in grades K–3. Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now provides standards-based resources that address key elements of the Reading First initiative, including classroom-focused instruction, professional development, and ongoing assessment. Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now provides engaging technology and curriculum resources that contribute to student achievement and help all children become successful readers.

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Todos a leer con PLATO Achieve Now Resources

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