

Improving Instruction With TpT School Access

AT BONITA CANYON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



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INTRODUCTION

Improving Instruction with TpT School Access



Bonita Canyon Elementary School, Irvine CA

While teachers and principals recognize the importance of targeted, differentiated instruction for student achievement,¹ too often teachers find that the curriculum they're provided doesn't include everything required to meet the diverse needs of their learners. In order to ensure that all their students meet the necessary standards and learning targets, teachers frequently use their own funds to access the instructional materials that their students need.

At Bonita Canyon Elementary School (BCES), a public K-6 elementary school in Irvine, California, Principal Corey Pace recognized that his teachers were turning to Teachers Pay Teachers (TpT) — the world's largest site dedicated to teacher-created and teacher-tested materials — to differentiate instruction for their students. Seeking a way to support his teachers and improve instruction at his school, Principal Pace brought TpT School Access to BCES.

TpT School Access is a new school-wide subscription from Teachers Pay Teachers that gives teachers immediate access to a comprehensive library of engaging, standards-aligned resources. Read on to learn how teachers at BCES use teacher-created instructional materials from TpT to improve instruction and meet the needs of their students.

BONITA CANYON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Location: Irvine, CA

School Type: Public K-6

Teachers: 20 Teachers

Students: 449 Students

¹ Teachers Pay Teachers. (2019). *Differentiation in Today's Classroom: A TpT Report*. New York, NY.

Research Methods

The research team at TpT conducted a qualitative case study in order to better understand the impact of instructional materials from TpT and illustrate the various ways in which teachers at BCES use resources from TpT to meet the academic needs of their students. Evidence was gathered through more than 12 hours of semi-structured interviews, over eight hours of collecting observational data, and document review. During the interviews, the team asked exploratory research questions to understand how Teachers Pay Teachers resources support instruction at BCES. At the end of this report, you'll find an examination of our observations in three classrooms across three different grade levels where teachers used TpT resources — provided for by their school — to meet their students' needs through small groups, leveled work, and individualized learning.

THE CHALLENGE:

Improving Instruction Across Multiple Classrooms with Unique Needs

Like most school leaders, Principal Pace is focused on improving instruction at his school². His focus is not unique: over 91% of principals cite improving instruction as a challenge they face in their role.³ Most principals are unable to be in every classroom every day, observing and coaching every moment of instruction for every student. The question then is: how can a principal improve instruction across classrooms that are led by different teachers and are serving students with diverse needs?

Principals and teachers often turn to differentiation, an instructional strategy that ensures students' unique abilities, interests, and preferences are acknowledged and supported throughout their learning. However, in a survey conducted by the Fordham Institute, over 80% of teachers reported differentiating instruction as “somewhat” or “very difficult” to implement.⁵ And **recent research** conducted by TpT — reflecting opinions of over 600 teachers — confirmed that teachers find differentiation challenging and

pinpointed significant barriers to doing so, including: **1)** a lack of materials that already include different levels of difficulty, and **2)** limited access to enough instructional materials.

DID YOU KNOW?

Over 91% of principals cite improving instruction as a challenge they face in their role.⁴

² Sebastian, J., Allensworth, E., & Huang, H. (2016). The Role of Teacher Leadership in How Principals Influence Classroom Instruction and Student Learning. *American Journal of Education*, 123, 74-79.

^{3,4} Market Data Retrieval. (2017). *School Trends: Principals' Perspectives on Instructional Initiatives and Purchasing Decisions* (State of the K-12 Market 2017). Shelton, CT: Goldberg, M.

⁵ Loveless, T., Parkas, S., Duffett, A. (2008). *High-Achieving Students in the Era of NCLB*. Thomas B. Fordham Institute.



DIFFICULTY DIFFERENTIATING

From a nationwide survey of 900 teachers by Fordham Institute, over 80% of teachers reported differentiating instruction as “somewhat” or “very difficult” to implement.⁶

Like many districts in the U.S., the Irvine Unified School District provides its schools a blueprint for instruction with essential standards and learning targets for each grade level. BCES teachers have access to district-wide adopted materials that serve mostly as the foundation for their curriculum⁷. At BCES in particular, the instructional materials provided to teachers inevitably don’t cover everything teachers need to meet their students’ needs. So they frequently rely on other supplementary resources to ensure that all of their students are mastering the essential standards and learning targets. This is when BCES teachers turn to Teachers Pay Teachers.

FINDING A SOLUTION AT BCES:

Access to Resources That Meet Every Student Need



Christian H., 1st Grade Teacher, BCES

Similar to over 80% of teachers in the U.S., teachers at BCES were using their own personal funds to purchase instructional materials for their classrooms from Teachers Pay Teachers. Principal Pace recognized that his teachers looked to the expertise of teacher creators on TpT and the resources they create in order to improve instruction and meet the diverse needs of their students. As a 1st grade teacher from BCES explained, “What makes a TpT resource special is that it’s created by teachers. And teachers who have experience working with students and know what kind of things students find interesting and engaging. And so because of that, I can trust that the material is rigorous, it has the right content, and it’s aligned to standards.”

⁶ Loveless, T., Parkas, S., Duffett, A. (2008). *High-Achieving Students in the Era of NCLB*. Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

⁷ Simba Information. (2019) *Publishing for the PreK-12 Market, 2019-2020*. Rockville, MD: Mickey, K., & Meaney, K.

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CHRISTIAN H.

1st Grade Teacher, BCES

Over the years, a few teachers had sporadically applied for reimbursements for the TpT resources they were using — but Pace was appalled when he found out that his teachers were spending hundreds of dollars out of pocket each year on TpT to meet their students’ needs. “In order to meet the needs of all learners, my staff needs to feel supported,” he said. And a big part of that support is providing his teachers with access to the instructional materials they need. When a 2nd grade teacher told Pace about a way to pay for TpT resources for all of his teachers, Pace saw the rare opportunity to empower his teachers to improve both instruction and learning for all students — and immediately said yes.



“My job is to support my teachers. It’s to make sure that they can do their job to the best of their ability for our kids.”

COREY PACE

Principal, BCES

Corey Pace, Principal, BCES

With TpT School Access, Principal Pace made it possible for BCES teachers to solve their classrooms’ unique instructional challenges, with one straightforward solution. His teachers are able to immediately access a comprehensive library of resources — including full units, assessments, project-based learning activities, and more — that cover all subject areas and grade levels. As a result, his teachers feel supported, since they can access the materials they need without sacrificing personal funds.

The Classroom Impact

TpT School Access empowered BCES teachers to solve their classrooms' unique instructional challenges. In particular, the TpT School Access library equipped BCES teachers with the resources they needed to support remediation for struggling readers, individualize learning for students with special needs, and provide enrichment activities for advanced students.



MATERIALS FOR SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION:

Supporting Remediation for Students

Ms. H has been a 1st grade teacher at BCES for the last 16 years. At the beginning of this school year, her students took a benchmark assessment in reading and she was able to identify a small group of six students who needed additional support, particularly with one Common Core literacy standard, RF.1.2.C, which requires students to be able to isolate and pronounce short vowel sounds. “So much of 1st grade is reading, and short vowel sounds are the very beginning of

building words,” she said. “So I wanted to make sure I was giving [that group of students] support right from the start.”

Ms. H needed phonics word work that would include new and engaging ways to reteach the short vowel sounds and give her students additional practice. On TpT, she found a standards-aligned digital activity for Google Slides that required students to identify an image with a short vowel sound, like “pad” or a “bat,” and drag letters into Elkonin boxes to spell the word. She knew it was going to be a more engaging way for her students to practice and better understand short vowels than their routine phonics work.

She uploaded the short vowel resource to her students' Google Classroom accounts, and while the majority of her class participated in a reading lesson, Ms. H had the small group sit at a table with her teaching assistant to work through the activity on Chromebooks. It was a hit. “It was great,” Ms. H reflected. “My students knew exactly what to do.” While in the small group, one student excitedly pointed to an image and sounded out, “T-a-g, tag!” Another carefully used the trackpad to drag the letters p-a-n into the slide and joyfully exclaimed, “Pan!”

After school, Ms. H logged in to Google Classroom to review her students' work and confirmed that every student had successfully built the words. “I wanted to make sure that they understood the concept before moving on to the next,” she explained. Since each student was able to complete the task effectively, Ms. H knew that her students were ready to move on to the next short vowel in the TpT resource.



MATERIALS FOR INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING:

Supporting Students with Autism

Ms. O teaches the joint kindergarten and 1st grade classroom for students with autism at BCES. The autism program serves 22 students with a wide range of abilities and needs. Her seven students range from ages four to seven with grade proficiencies from pre-kindergarten to 1st grade.

When it comes to instruction, Ms. O doesn't have a curriculum. Instead, she is given a guideline of what her students should be learning. On top of that, she has to make sure that everything she is teaching is individualized for every student so that it appeals to their unique interests and is accessible based on their academic and physical abilities. Unsurprisingly, this requires a lot of time and effort which is why she turns to Teachers Pay Teachers for support. "[The teacher creators] really get it. They've been there, they know what teachers need, they know the level of differentiation, they know all of the adaptations [I need], and it just makes it really easy to create stuff for my kiddos."

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MS. O

Special Education Teacher, BCES

In order to individualize learning and promote independence, Ms. O provides her students with activities from TpT that appeal to their preferred learning modalities, particularly for those who are more visual or kinesthetic learners. "My kids aren't going to be able to do a black and white worksheet," she explained. "It has to appeal to all of their senses." On TpT, she finds

resources that are hands-on, have bright colors, and use enlarged print, such as a file folder resource she used during structured independent work time. Before using this resource, Ms. O laminated and added Velcro to the different activities, including a shape match and a number-to-number match activity. Then, her students completed the task independently using the pictures as visual cues and the Velcro pieces to engage in their learning in a hands-on way.

Given her students' individual needs, it can be a challenge for Ms. O to set her students up for productive, independent work time, but the resources she finds on TpT keep them focused, engaged, and learning.

"My kids aren't going to be able to do a black and white worksheet. It has to appeal to all of their senses."

MS. O

Special Education Teacher, BCES



Ms. N in her 6th grade math class

MATERIALS FOR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL WORK:

Supporting Enrichment for GATE Students

Ms. N is a 6th grade math teachers at BCES. One challenge she frequently faces is making sure she’s meeting the needs of all of her students, especially those who are mastering learning targets and continue to need to be challenged further. She struggles to find a balance between supporting the needs of her students who need intervention while also supporting the needs of students who need opportunities to extend their learning. As a result, Ms. N turns to TpT because she knows she can find activities that already have different levels of difficulty built in, including extension activities for her students who are already mastering math concepts.

Recently, she used a TpT resource to help all of her students practice greatest common factors (GCF) and least common multiples (LCM). The resource already included three sets of number questions. The first set included basic number questions for a 6th grader, like “What is the GCF of 6 and 8?” The second set had a few challenging questions like “What is the GCF of 28 and 40?” The final set had only above grade level questions like “What is the LCM of 30 and 75?” Ms. N’s students got to choose the level of difficulty they wanted to tackle during that lesson. “My kids were able to feel confident in their work because it was accessible for all of my students and included a level for what my [gifted and talented] kids needed.”

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MS. N

6th Grade Teacher, BCES

For Ms. N, the resource was a success, since even as all of her students were able to complete the task at varying levels, and she was also able to challenge her more advanced students.

Key Takeaways

The three instructional examples discussed in this report demonstrate the many ways in which teachers at BCES are working tirelessly to differentiate instruction for their students, and how TpT School Access is empowering them to do so.

- ✔ They turn to TpT School Access to **support remediation for struggling readers.**
- ✔ They turn to TpT School Access for resources that appeal to students who need content that suits their **individual learning styles and needs.**
- ✔ And they turn to TpT School Access to provide enrichment activities for the **full range of skills in a classroom, including for more advanced students.**

With TpT School Access, BCES teachers were no longer limited by personal budget constraints and could choose the best resources to meet their classroom needs from a comprehensive library of teacher-created, standards-aligned resources. The school's support allowed them to access more of the resources they already trusted for their students' needs.

For Principal Pace, the decision to support his teachers through TpT School Access was an easy one. He'll do anything to make sure that his teachers have what they need so that they can then meet the needs of their students, and he can already see the results.



Bonita Canyon Elementary School, Irvine CA

Want to learn more about TpT School Access?

Go to <http://bit.ly/tptschoolaccess> to learn more.