

# EBLI AND EFFECTIVE LITERACY TEACHING

HOW THIS CALIFORNIA TEACHER LEARNED THAT TEACHING LITERACY DIDN'T HAVE TO BE A STRUGGLE—FOR HER OR HER STUDENTS



Alicyn Cawley, teacher at Hanford Elementary

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- Alicyn Cawley on the impact EBLI has had in her teaching, both for her and her students.

## Teacher Profile



### Overview

- Teacher: Alicyn Cawley
- School: Pioneer Union Elementary
- District: Hanford, California
- Grade: Second
- Years Teaching: 20
- Number of Students in class: 28
- Students attending Pioneer Union: 1,605



### EBLI Tools

- EBLI In Person Training
- ETSL Training



### Expected Outcomes

- Increased student excitement to learn to write
- Greater student enthusiasm in learning to read
- More practice time as EBLI strategies are used across other subjects, not just during reading
- Reduced need for additional resources
- More time for students to concentrate on other skills
- Heightened student confidence in literacy



## The Challenge

Set in the sunny San Joaquin Valley of Central California, Pioneer Union Elementary School District in the City of Hanford serves some 1,605 students, from kindergarten to eighth grade. With approximately 25 kids for every 1 teacher, instructors must work diligently to ensure the success of every child in their classroom, especially when it comes to an essential like reading.

Second grade teacher Alicyn Cawley knows the struggle well: “We have a literacy problem, and when you have a literacy problem it affects everything. We used to have students who maybe couldn’t read, but they did great in math! But now that math involves so much reading, if you can’t read, you can’t do your math either. We’re seeing those math scores drop because of the reading and writing that it takes to be successful in math.”

Unfortunately, teachers haven’t always been provided with the tools necessary to effectively teach literacy. Alicyn observes: “It’s like a shot in the dark. You have those meetings where you meet with mentors, and you learn what they do, and you pick up best practices from other teachers that are doing it. You pick things up from the trainings that you go into. But then it just becomes a bag of tricks.”

Alicyn knows that her students deserve an education that can give them the language skills they need to succeed across the board, so when she was presented with the opportunity to train with EBLI, she knew it was the right time to go all in and try something new.

# Training with EBLI

Throughout her 20-year career as a teacher, Alicyn has taken a number of approaches to literacy education: “There were strategies that we would use to help the students learn to read. Each reading series had its own plan. Through each of the reading series that I taught, it just became, ‘Here’s just a bunch of different things that you can do if you don’t know this word.’”

Despite these efforts, Alicyn still felt that something was missing from the equation. “If the students are not participating in the lesson, they’re missing two thirds of what we’re doing. So I do spend a lot of time trying to keep my students engaged, and trying to get them to become participants in their education. But you spend a lot of time doing it, and it’s every day, and it’s constant, and you can’t let up.” Constantly having to battle for her students’ attention was causing a ripple effect in her classroom.

This changed with the introduction of EBLI to Pioneer Elementary as part of the Kings County Literacy Impact Pact (KLIP). Alicyn recalls: “I was talking to our director of curriculum and instruction, and she had mentioned EBLI, which I had heard about previously, and she said they’re thinking of doing it through the district and asked if anyone was interested, and I said I totally am. So that summer they offered a training and I got to participate.”

EBLI’s unique approach to literacy learning was immediately apparent to Alicyn, despite some initial hesitation. “I’m a very outspoken person, and so, good or bad, was going



to be vocal about it. And I was skeptical because I didn’t understand it. And even sitting in the training, I didn’t really get it.”

But these doubts were quickly dispelled as the training continued: “It started to make more sense; I grew a little more confident with it. This is the first training I’ve ever been to where I left not feeling like, ‘Here we go, another something else for me to try,’ but rather with an excitement to do it, and a desire to do it, because I could see the benefit.”



## Adding ETSL

Since beginning her training, Alicyn has enjoyed getting to know the EBLI team. Of EBLI's founders, Nora and Hannah Chahbazi, Alicyn says, "They're the best. I've been to trainings where the presenters will say, 'Here's my email; email me,' which I never do because I don't ever feel like I have anything I need to email you for. Yet, I feel like I email Nora or Hannah at least once a week with some question, and they always respond."



Having access to such a supportive team has proven immensely beneficial as Alicyn incorporates the EBLI strategies into her teaching. The addition of EBLI Training and Student Lessons, or ETSL, has allowed her to take her EBLI strategies to the next level, "When you're learning the system, you have the ETSL videos and that is so helpful. I'm learning along with the students, so I'm seeing how Nora does it, and how the kids are doing it, and it all falls into place. When you hit video 30 or 35, there are no more videos, so you take over. The best way to get good at EBLI is to do EBLI." From there, Alicyn has access to the lesson documents from the members portal and can print it out to use in the classroom, "Then it's my turn to lead the lesson."

Allison has found ways to maximize the EBLI strategies for her students while also maximizing them for herself, "it's not an additional thing I have to do. I can use the stories that come up in our curriculum, and I can use the EBLI strategies like multiple-syllable split word reading, multiple-syllable split word writing, 10-word summary sentences, read-read-back-again, straight out of my series. That's what makes it even better than I thought it was at the beginning."

Making sure that Alicyn's day becomes easier, is an essential part of the EBLI tools, "Those are the stories that I'm teaching, those are the spelling words, those are the vocabulary words, that's what I'm teaching. So I can use those stories and the EBLI curriculum together, not on-top-of. You get to a point in the lessons where it's integrated, it's not another thing."

Alicyn also loves how versatile the lessons are, “I can use it with anything: math, science, history. Whatever content you’re teaching, the EBLI strategies fit in. That makes it different from other things because there are some programs that only work in the program you’re using them in. These strategies work in whatever subject area or program you happen to be teaching. Teachers feel like they don’t have time, and once you get into EBLI, it doesn’t take more time. I’m using it with my stories, so I’m getting double the bonus from these strategies as compared to what I’ve used in the past.”

Saving time like this has allowed Alicyn to focus her efforts in advancing the class to areas she had not considered before. “One week, our lesson was writing five paragraph essays in second grade. It’s crazy, right? But because it is so systematic and because they have done such a good job of scaffolding writing in small pieces, it was not nearly as hard as I feel like I worked last year when I was trying to get students to write a five paragraph essay.”

## EBLI In The Classroom

The results in the classroom backed up Alicyn’s excitement. She says: “In a short amount of time, I’ve seen students really take to the EBLI lessons and use them in other ways. They’re using EBLI strategies when they’re writing and answering a math problem, or they’re paying closer attention to what their handwriting looks like. They get a hold of these little pieces, and these little pieces are showing success in other areas of our day.”



The new system has allowed Alicyn to improve upon her existing teaching method, to the benefit of her students: “I can teach kids to read. I can teach struggling kids to read, and I can teach kids to go deeper in their understanding. It’s not like I didn’t know what I was doing prior to EBLI, but it is very much like, ‘Well, this is a lot easier than what I have been doing.’”

And what’s good for Alicyn has proven to be good for the kids, who have taken to the program in a big way.

"My students absolutely love it. They get very excited when I say, 'Get out your boards.' I feel like they enjoy it because they get it. It makes sense to them and therefore they can get behind it because of that. They're going all in with me. We're all kind of going 100% right now. It's probably their favorite time. They ask me 100 times a day: 'Do we get to do EBLI again?'; 'Are we doing EBLI right now?'; 'I love this part.' They're very engaged the entire time."

## Looking to the Future

Without a doubt, EBLI has revolutionized Alicyn's classroom. "In terms of EBLI overall, I think the biggest thing is: it doesn't have to become something else that you have to do. I'm not doing it in addition to the curriculum that I'm teaching. One EBLI lesson can cover reading, writing, spelling, phonics, grammar, handwriting – one lesson!"

The results speak for themselves: "One of my little loves struggles a bit academically, and struggles attention-wise a lot, and I was telling him, 'Look at your work! Look at this writing, it's so readable and it's so nice.' And he said, 'I think EBLI is going to make me a better reader and writer.' And I said, 'I think you're right.' From the mouths of babes, right?"

EBLI has enabled Alicyn to focus on inspiring confidence and instilling a love of learning in each of her children. "It's easier for the kids, but more importantly it's easier for me. Because we work hard every day. So if I can have something that makes my job easier, but is still just as or even more effective than what I was doing before – yes! One hundred times yes."



*Teaching the World to Read.™*

# PARTNERING WITH EBLI

The EBLI Team believes that no one should suffer from not being properly taught how to read.

Teachers are the experts, and they need the right tools to help their students succeed. To create stronger literacy learning, bolster educational engagement among students, and increase performance for reading and writing, EBLI offers training and support solutions for literacy instructors, administrators, parents, and anyone who wants to enhance their literacy skill set.

EBLI has helped thousands of teachers across the globe to successfully implement the #1 evidence based literacy instruction program. To learn more about how EBLI can help your struggling students, stay up to date on the latest literacy research, and be the first to know about upcoming trainings, join our email list at [www.ebli.com](http://www.ebli.com).



Evidence-Based  
Literacy Instruction™