



Arvin Union School District sits at the base of Bear Mountain in the southern Central Valley of California. Rich in agriculture, Arvin's local economy is driven by its farms and its packinghouses, which ship a wide variety of produce around the world.

In serving a farming community, Arvin Union School District experiences unique challenges. Employment levels vary greatly by season, and migrants make up fifteen percent of the population. 67 percent of Arvin's students are English learners, and over 93 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch. But the school culture is one of pride, determination, and most important, success. Over the last two years, absentee rates have declined, student engagement in voluntary reading and the fine arts has increased, and test scores have risen dramatically in both ELA and math.

Arvin partnered with the Thoughtful Classroom in 2016 to establish professional development "learning cycles." These learning cycles continue to this day and include customized training and coaching for teachers and leaders. Each cycle is designed to help Arvin's staff focus in on a particular problem of practice and master tools and strategies to address it.

According to Assistant Superintendent Georgia Rhett, Arvin's partnership with the Thoughtful Classroom has been a critical factor behind Arvin's success. "There are three things about the Thoughtful Classroom that have helped us make positive change in Arvin," says Georgia. "First, the Thoughtful Classroom tool known as the Learning Window has changed the way our teachers establish instructional objectives. Thanks to the Learning Window, we now put much more emphasis on developing objectives that promote deep understanding, positive habits of mind, and long-term transfer to help our students succeed beyond school. Second, the Thoughtful Classroom instructional-design framework has given our staff a common language for building lessons and units that truly engage students—and instructional tools that make it easier for teachers to see what students need and modify instruction accordingly.\* Third, the Thoughtful Classroom's focus on instructional leadership has been key. By coaching our staff in how to use instructional-leadership tools like The 4 Ps of Effective Feedback and Learning Walks, the Thoughtful Classroom team has helped our school leaders make the transition from the process of evaluating teachers to using the process to help teachers grow."

#### Looking at the Data

Using a Thoughtful Classroom learning-cycle approach of training and coaching, Arvin has been able to make significant gains in nearly all areas, including student test scores. The table below shows the gains that Arvin's third – eighth graders made between 2015 and 2017 on the state test (Smarter Balanced) for both ELA and mathematics.

Change by student group in ELA scores	Number of students tested	Change (Scale score growth)	Change by student group in math scores	Number of students tested	Change (Scale score growth)
English Learners	1563	+12.5	English Learners	1561	+14.9
Homeless Youth	157	+10.2	Homeless Youth	157	+10.5
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	1808	+9.4	Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	1805	+12.2
All Students	1859	+8.5	All Students	1856	+11.7
Hispanic	1783	+8.3	Hispanic	1781	+11.5
White	57	+7.9	White	57	+6.6
Students with Disabilities	198	+1.4	Students with Disabilities	198	+6.6

\*NOTE: These Thoughtful Classroom tools can be found in *Tools for Thoughtful Assessment* (2012), *Tools for Conquering the Common Core* (2015), *Tools to Start the School Year* (2016), and *Tools for Classroom Instruction That Works* (2018). Learn more at [www.ToolsforTodayEducators.com](http://www.ToolsforTodayEducators.com).