

From 69% to 89%: Green Valley's Third-Grade Growth Story

Focus Areas

- Engagement
- Confidence
- Feedback
- Writing Growth

From Pressure to Progress

At Green Valley Elementary in Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City Independent School District, northeast of San Antonio in Region 20, third-grade teachers **Kimberly McDaniel** and **Luanne Retzloff** faced a familiar challenge: **lagging STAAR scores and high student anxiety.**

After more than a decade teaching together in third grade, Kimberly and Luanne knew the toll of testing could take. They wanted a way to help students build skills and confidence, without the stress that testing season can bring.

Instructional Coach **Carissa Livingston**, known for her hands-on, “do whatever it takes” approach, modeled a Curipod lesson in their classrooms. What began as curiosity turned into conviction. With the support of their visionary principal, **Trina Simmons**, the third grade team went to work.



“We trusted the process,” Luanne said.
“After that first lesson, we were all in.”

From Challenge to Change

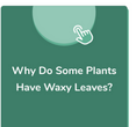
The team began using Curipod twice a month, then ramped up to weekly sessions ahead of STAAR. By spring, Curipod had become a staple in both ELA and social studies, helping turn dry textbook lessons into interactive, formative learning experiences.

Kimberly explained, “It gave our kids something new to look forward to. Every day we did Curipod, it was a different challenge.”



That variety and immediacy transformed writing practice from something students dreaded into something they **wanted to do.**

Read the Passage



Explain why some plants have waxy leaves...

That's a rather thing that keeps these intelligent plants safe. The author says this in paragraph 3 and 4 it says in paragraph 3 this keeps the leaves from getting too heavy and breaking. Paragraph 4 it says, some animals like to eat plants. But the waxy coating can make it harder for animals to eat them.

The reason why plants have waxy leaves is because the water in these plants, don't get out and so it makes it waxy and it doesn't.

Some plants have waxy leaves to protect them because, sometimes plants get too much sun and that can get the plants sick. I know this because in paragraph 5 it said "The waxy layer helps protect the plant from getting too much sun. This is important because too much sun can hurt the plant and make it sick. So, this explains why some plants have waxy leaves."

Some plants have waxy leaves

plants have waxy leaves to benefit them from getting hot and dry. They probably live in a hot climate and they need to survive just like us. These plants store water in them to survive, but the reason they have this waxy coat is to prevent the water from escaping. Because, they need water to survive. Some plants have spines like cacti to stop animals from eating them. But that's not all, cacti also store water in them to survive in there hot climate. Did you know that in the rain forest, the waxy leaves

Some plants have waxy leaves

Some plants have waxy leaves to store water inside itself to not dry out and die, the waxy coat keeps it from getting too much sunlight and getting sick or hurt. Fun fact the waxy leaves can save up to 30% more water than plants without them. It said in the passage

Some plants have waxy leaves so some animals don't eat the plant. I got my answers from paragraph 4

Explain

Plants have waxy leaves because, in paragraph 5 it said waxy coating protect plants from the sun. The waxy coating can also protect plants from getting eaten from animals. And keeping water in.

Plants in paragraph 3 said waxy coating can help plants keep water in.

The reason why plants have waxy leaves is because the water in these plants, don't get out and so it makes it waxy and it doesn't.

Some plants have waxy leaves

♥ You mentioned some reasons why plants have waxy leaves. Great start!

📌 Development and Organization of Ideas: 1 Try to include more details and organize your ideas clearly.

📌 Command of Writing Conventions: 1 Work on using correct punctuation and spelling to make your writing clearer.

💡 To improve, make sure to use complete sentences and check for punctuation. For example, "Sed" should be "said" and needs a capital letter.

Results That Speak for Themselves

Green Valley’s third graders achieved the **highest scores in the district**, catching the attention of **Superintendent Paige Meloni**.

“She came to our PLC and asked what we were doing,” Kimberly recalled. “We said, Curipod.”

Along with their impressive growth in Meets and Masters, teachers noted a major drop in students scoring zeros, from 61% down to 39%. That shift reflects more than better writing; it shows growing confidence and a willingness to try.

3rd Grade STAAR ELA Growth	
	% Passing
2023-2024 <i>No Curipod</i>	69%
2024-2025 <i>With Curipod</i>	89%

The Curipod Shift

- ✓ **Immediate, Actionable Feedback**

Students saw their writing improve in real time. “It’s the same advice I’ve told them a million times,” said Kimberly, “but when they read it in feedback, they act on it. Literally in five minutes, their writing goes from this to this.”
- ✓ **Engagement and Joyful Challenge**

Variety kept energy high and kept students excited and on their toes. “They love the podium and the voting. It motivates them to improve,” Kimberly said.
- ✓ **Confidence and Inclusion**

Curipod created space for every voice. “A super quiet boy is one of the top-voted answers every time,” said Luanne. “He doesn’t want to speak out loud, but he’s proud when people read his writing.”
- ✓ **Collaborative Culture**

Peer discussion became the norm. “They encourage each other. ‘Let’s look at your feedback. What can you do?’” said Luanne. “That community piece has been huge.”
- ✓ **Calibration and Coaching**

For Carissa, the impact extended to teachers, too. “We needed consistency at STAAR rigor,” she explained. “Curipod removed bias: same prompt, same rubric, same standard for every student. Teachers even learned by writing and scoring themselves first.”

Why It Matters

For Green Valley’s third-grade team, Curipod didn’t just boost scores. It shifted the mindset.

Feedback → Confidence, Engagement → Equity

Their results prove what happens when strong teaching meets the right tool. “It’s not just about numbers,” Kimberly reflected. “Our kids believe they can do hard things now.” And it all began with trust—trusting the process, trusting one another, and helping students learn to trust themselves.

