

CASE STUDY

A Leap of Faith Helps 99% of Students Read at Grade Level

Mary Walter Elementary School,
Fauquier County School District, Virginia

Lexia®

LEXIA
CORE5
READING



Nothing Worked

For Mary Walter Elementary School, the literacy learning struggle was becoming untenable. When students come from a variety of backgrounds—as they do at Mary Walter—their wide range of literacy skills and abilities can challenge teachers, who have to try to meet and teach to every student’s level. As Mary Walter Elementary Principal Alex O’Dell stated, “For several years, our [state] SOL scores in reading continued to go down. None of the interventions we tried worked.”

O’Dell and his teachers wanted to find ways to help their students become successful readers and confident learners by closing literacy skill gaps and improving state test scores. They especially hoped to help their large Emergent Bilingual population, which composed 26% of the student body. A personalized learning approach was the goal, but they hadn’t yet found a program that delivered the results they were looking for.

A New Contender

Then, the school’s reading specialist, Chrissy Yonkey, heard about Lexia® Core5® Reading from a colleague. Yonkey was eager to try Core5 in her reading centers. “I told her to try it,” said Principal O’Dell, “but I thought it was going to be another one of those programs that would promise a lot and deliver very little.” While they only had a small number of licenses, Yonkey was hopeful her students would benefit. She’d heard that Core5 is a research-proven

literacy program that enables students to work independently at their own pace and adapts to each of their specific needs. If it worked, the personalized approach would help close skill gaps and accelerate learning.

Core5 delivered better results than the educators expected. “I immediately fell in love with Core5,” Yonkey said. “Students using the online part of the program were receiving effective, differentiated instruction while I worked with students individually [to address] their specific literacy needs.”

Students were excited and motivated to work in Core5. They found the program’s graphics and gamelike atmosphere very engaging. Most importantly, they responded to the personalized learning approach. Based on the accelerated and extended learning demonstrated by her students, Yonkey saw potential benefits for every student if they implemented Core5 schoolwide.

O’Dell also saw the dramatic literacy gains Yonkey’s students were making, and knew the school would have to expand. “When I saw Core5 enable a third-grade student to progress from reading at a pre-primer level to a third-grade level in a matter of months, I knew it was the program for us,” O’Dell said. “That student later achieved a high score on his [state] SOL reading test. I felt his success on the SOL had a strong connection to his work in Core5. I made the decision to purchase a Core5 site license and to use it schoolwide.”



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—Alex O’Dell, Principal, Mary Walter Elementary School

Taking the Leap

The decision was well worth it. In less than one school year, Core5 data show a substantial increase in the percentage of students working in or above grade level in Core5 from 40% to 99%—more than doubling the number of students reading in their grade.¹ “Our students are advancing their literacy skills using Core5 and our [Emergent Bilingual] students are doing especially well. The program is helping them with their decoding and vocabulary,” Yonkey said. “They’re learning quickly.”


In addition to using the online program, students at Mary Walter Elementary use Core5’s offline resources to practice their skills. Third-grade teacher Lisa Allen noted, “Core5’s offline instructional resources offer students practice in skills that teachers cannot review every day. These activities help students build and extend their vocabulary and spelling skills.”

O’Dell now mandates the use of Core5 for students of all abilities. “Core5 helps our students build foundational literacy skills, identifies skill gaps as they emerge, and provides my teachers with the instructional materials to address those gaps,” O’Dell said. “The real-time performance data in Core5 enable our teachers and administrators to monitor student progress on an ongoing basis.”

Lexia Core5 Reading is an adaptive blended learning program that accelerates literacy development and benefits students of all abilities—helping them make the shift from learning to read to reading to learn. O’Dell concluded, “It’s an all-in-one stellar package that seamlessly integrates into the classroom and has been very effective for us.”

In less than a year, students working in or above grade level increased from

40 to 99%



¹ Students meeting recommended usage in Core5 (N=300) at least 50% of the time with at least 16 weeks of use between 8/24/16–5/14/2017

Success: By the Numbers

Students working in or above grade level **increased from 40% to 99%**.

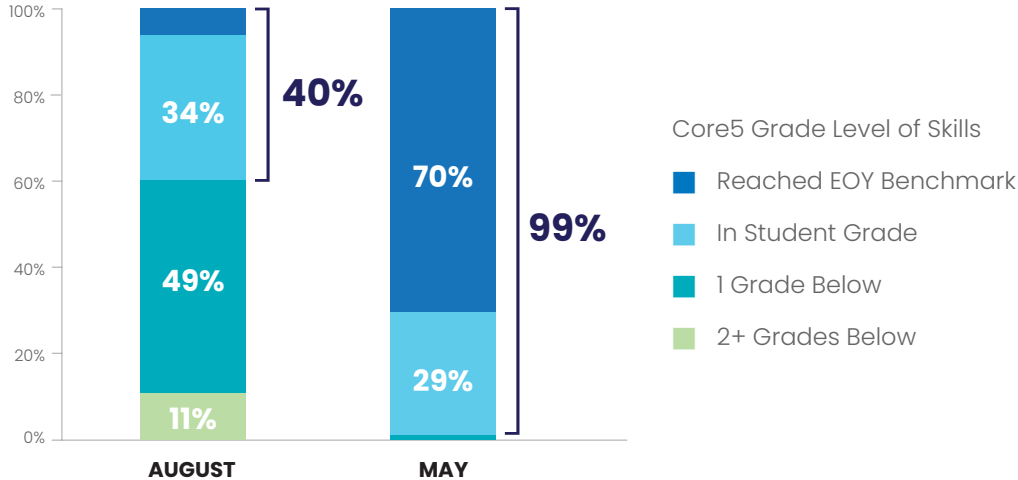
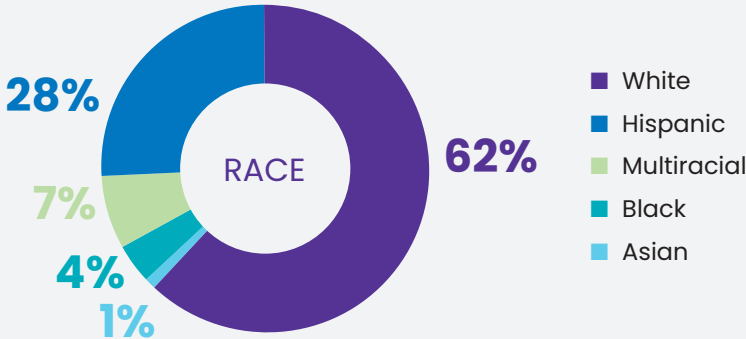


Figure 1. Progress of Students Meeting Usage (N=300)

Profile: Mary Walter Elementary School, Virginia

- Enrollment: 430
- Grades: Pre-K–5
- Economically disadvantaged: 54%
- Mainstream learners with special instructional needs: 15%–20%
- Emergent Bilinguals: 26%



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