

CASE STUDY

Intentionality in Implementation Leads a North Carolina District to Literacy Success





Craven County School District in North Carolina faces unique challenges, including a large, transient military family population and a steadily increasing number of multilingual learner students, many of whom arrive from other countries speaking little to no English.

While it is often challenging to meet the varied learning needs of students who frequently move in and out of the district, Craven County received the Purple Star Award, due to its military-friendly practices and commitment to supporting military students and families across all 26 schools.

Prior to adopting Lexia® products, Craven County leaders were motivated to find a solution to address skill gaps among students who presented a diverse range of needs. They were concerned not only about the “achievement gap” but also the “instructional gap,” caused by teachers with insufficient tools and resources to most effectively teach students.

Seeking a Solution

Jason Griffin has seen many schools in action, thanks to his tenure as 2017 North Carolina Principal of the Year. While on the speaking circuit that year, he visited schools across the state and had the opportunity to gain insight into how other district leaders were dealing with skills gaps.

The following year, when he started in his current role as executive director of elementary and federal programs for Craven County, he was ready to make sweeping changes from the top down.

“I wanted to replicate some of the solutions in this district I had seen across North Carolina,” he said. “I stepped into this position knowing that we could turn around a low-performing school in two years and go from failing to a B. But we needed something extra. Core5 was the extra piece.”

Lexia® Core5® Reading is an Adaptive Blended Learning program that accelerates the development of literacy skills for students of all abilities. When Griffin stepped into his new role, Craven County had recently launched a pilot of Core5. The elementary school that hosted the pilot was considered low-performing by North Carolina standards, but with Lexia its scores became high enough to no longer be considered low performing, and justified Griffin’s vision for a broader rollout.

Intentionality in Implementation

As Core5 was rolled out districtwide, Lexia quickly became “part of the district DNA.” For Craven County, Lexia is an instrumental part of its state-required literacy intervention plan. It’s not “just another thing” for teachers, Griffin said. When it’s tied to everything, it’s a part of everyday business and drives literacy efforts across the district.

From Griffin’s perspective, intentionality with implementation is crucial for long-term success. “From day 1, we had a plan from the top of the district to the classrooms,” Griffin said. “We made sure we had all the right people at the table, from administrators and assistant principals to instructional coaches and MTSS folks. And we’ve continued to hold teacher trainings every year.

“We have been very intentional with Core5 and our professional development,” he continued. “We have district elementary coaches who help with onboarding, to ensure all teachers know how to use Core5.”

When the pandemic hit, Craven County was fortunate to be able to turn on a dime. Core5 was already in place and allowed teachers to smoothly transition to remote education.

“A report came out recently from the state department showing that Craven County has returned back to pre-COVID numbers,” Griffin said.

Not many district leaders can say that yet.



Craven County Sees Consistent Success

Thanks to Core5, the district has seen a consistent increase in scores for grades 3 through 8 during the past five years. “When we started this journey five years ago, we were looking for a program that would help us fill in skill gaps,” Griffin said. “Core5 has helped us to fill those skill gaps while also providing teachers with the tools and resources they need to fill in those gaps. We have seen increases in our end-of-grade (EOG) scores, consecutively, for five years.”

Griffin attributes the improvement in scores to the district’s Core5 implementation, from the regular trainings for teachers to the shared data scoreboards educators review regularly. Analyzing and sharing the data available through Lexia has become a reliable and valuable tool for administrators and educators alike.

“In the beginning it was all about usage, but now we’re more intentional,” Griffin said “We’re looking at specific skills across grade levels, across the whole district.

“Our teachers are aware that we’re reporting this information once a week, and it’s something we’re watching at the district level,” he continued. “They understand how we use the results to impact teaching and learning—and they look at their own results and discuss common trends and how they can adjust their instruction. Principals are going into Lexia on the first of the month to check out their predictors.”

The North Carolina LETRS Connection



“ All the work we’ve done with [Lexia®] LETRS®, also ties in with Core5. We had Core5 first, and when we added LETRS, it was like lightbulbs went off. Teachers see all the connections. Lexia has done a really good job, specifically Core5, with the correlation of all the different skills, and how that ties into LETRS.

We were part of the earlier cohorts through the state, and now we’re doing cohorts for [Lexia®] LETRS® for Early Childhood Educators and [Lexia®] LETRS® for Administrators. We’ve got a sustainability plan with that, that’s also going to help with the work we’re doing with Core5.”

– Jason Griffin, Executive Director of Elementary and Federal Programs, Craven County School District



Layering in Emergent Bilingual Learner Support

To support the increasing population of non-native English speakers, district leaders have folded in Lexia English Language Development™ in addition to Core5.

Lexia English was designed to help Emergent Bilingual students, also known as English Language Learners, in grades K–6 acquire higher language proficiency levels of English. By meeting students where they are, Core5 and Lexia English level the playing field and meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and learning needs.

Taylor Stewart, a K–5 ESL teacher, and Kathleen Brinson, a multilingual teacher and refugee school impact coordinator, both teaching at schools in the Craven County School district, decided to run a pilot of Lexia English during the 2021–2022 school year. They wanted to provide more targeted support for the growing population of students arriving from other countries with little to no previous experience with English.

“Our district started using Core5 several years ago, and then Kathleen and I piloted Lexia English—and we loved it,” Stewart said.

Like Core5, Lexia English is now in use districtwide.

Stewart and Brinson worked with Lexia and the district to create a plan for Newcomer students in elementary school who start in Lexia English and move into Core5 when they’re ready—usually once they’re ready to start talking, around the two-year mark.

Level Up Literacy Success With Lexia English and Core5

At the schools where Stewart and Brinson teach, the students often arrive directly from their home country and have no experience speaking English. They're overwhelmed. They're learning a new language, in a new school, and they don't have the background, experiences, or word-recognition skills to be able to read.

"Lexia English provides a softer entrance," Stewart said.

Students using Lexia English get to ease into listening and speaking to build a foundation for later reading proficiency. It provides a runway that eventually leads them to Core5.

Using both products allows these educators to meet a broader range of needs across the board. "By using both, we're giving our students everything they need. Not just phonics, not just vocabulary—they need an opportunity to practice listening, reading, writing, and especially speaking independently and then have lessons to build those skills," Brinson said.

Daytime tutors paid for by a grant from the Refugee School Impact Program work with Newcomer students, and Lexia English provides learning materials for them to work on.


Once students are ready to begin talking and start understanding more basic instructions, they're ready to move into Core5.

Students starting in Level 1 Lexia English progress to Level 2 and then add in Core5 at Level 3. Then, they're doing both—perhaps Core5 two days a week and Lexia English three days a week or vice versa. They continue to move up as they progress, supported by both products.

"My colleagues are taken aback by the speaking opportunities for our Newcomers," Brinson said. "ESOL teachers are used to making our speaking exercises. For them to already be in Lexia is so helpful."

"You don't have to find other things—there are so many choices," Stewart added. "There's no way we could ever get through all of it. We really can decide on our own what works best for us."

Spotlight on Student 'Superstar' Success Story



Brinson described seeing students do exceptionally well with this mix of instruction.

One second grade student arrived from Honduras in 2021 with no English experience at all. Every night, he and his mother worked through Lexia English, and eventually Core5, religiously.

"I saw him go from no English usage to being *at or above grade level*. In his third year, he's on grade level. From zero to grade level is HUGE," Brinson said.

Committed to Literacy for All

Because Lexia products are backed by the science of reading, teachers have the opportunity to meet every learner exactly where they are and make instructional decisions that support literacy for all.

Both programs provide the resources teachers need for students at every level. Instead of spending precious time searching for tools and exercises, they can focus on accelerating learning, for both students who have fallen behind and students ahead of the curve.

Griffin's vision includes not just closing gaps, but ensuring advanced students are also given every opportunity. "It's not just about meeting students where they are," he said. "With Core5, we can meet them where they are, but we can also see how far they can go.

"So many districts will use a program for three years and jump to something else," he continued. "But we've been intentional with keeping this program, it's part of our DNA, and we can see the difference it makes."

"We've been doing Lexia for a while," Brinson said. "And we're all in."

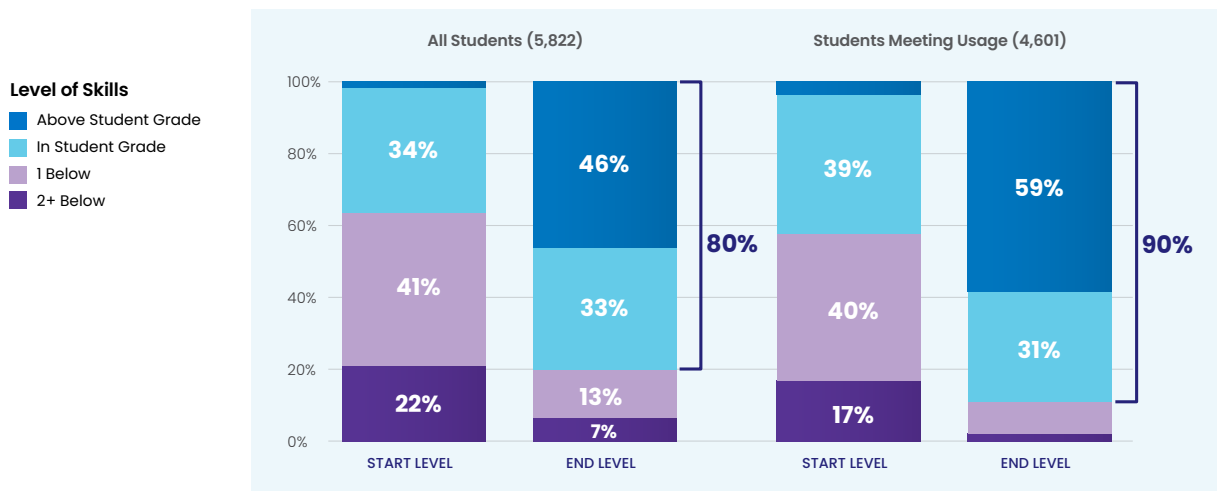
 [See what Lexia can do for your district.](#)



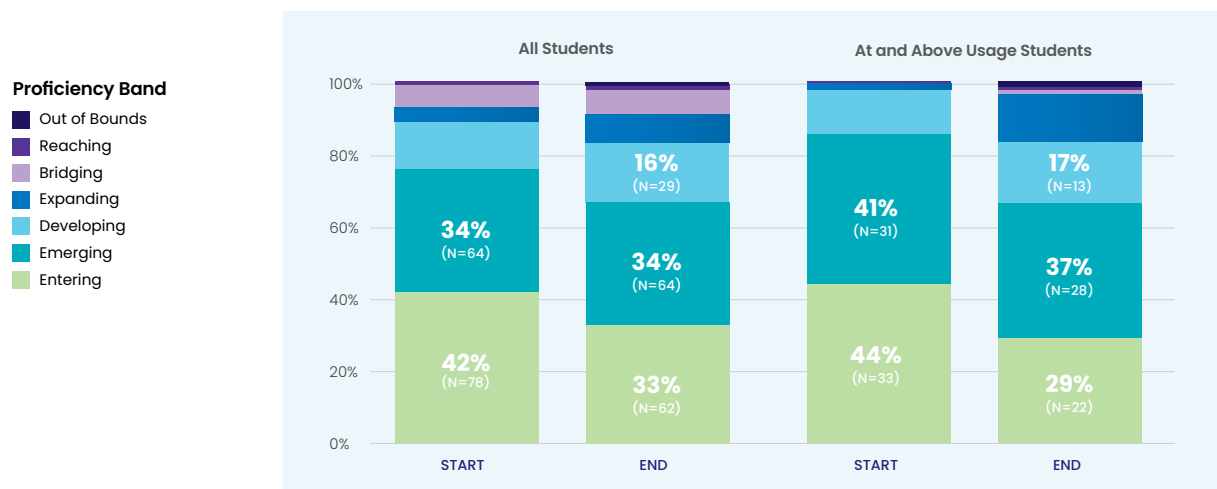
Success by the Numbers

In school year 2022–2023:

- 85% of students used Core5 with fidelity
- 92% of students who met Core5 usage targets were reading at or above grade level last year
- 92% of students using Core5 who met usage and 85% of all students advanced at least one grade level of material in the 2022–2023 school year





- 44% of students meeting usage in Lexia English moved up at least one proficiency band of in-program material





Lexia®, a Cambium Learning Group company, is a leader in science of reading-based solutions. For 40 years, the company has focused on pre-K–12 literacy and today provides solutions for every student and educator. With a complete offering of professional learning, curriculum, and embedded assessment, Lexia helps more learners read, write, and speak with confidence. For more information, visit lexialearning.com.

    lexialearning.com

© 2024 Lexia, a Cambium Learning Group company. Lexia®, Core5®, Lexia English™, Lexia LETRS®, and other trademarks, names, and logos used herein are the property of Lexia and/or its subsidiaries, and are registered and/or used in the United States and other countries. Additional trademarks included herein are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.