

CASE STUDY

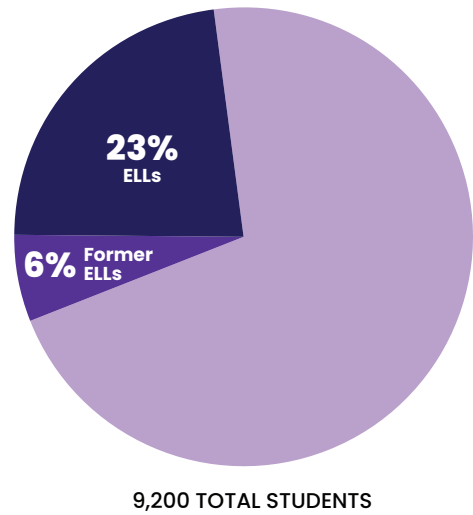
Lexia's PowerUp Literacy Delivers Major 6th–12th Grade Literacy Gains in Kentwood Public Schools, Michigan



Kentwood Public Schools Uses Lexia PowerUp to Improve Literacy

As the most diverse school district in Michigan—and seventh in the nation—Kentwood Public Schools serves about 9,200 students, 23% of whom are English Learners (ELs). Another 6% are former ELs, bringing the active multilingual learners total to nearly one-third of the district’s total student population.

Even after EL students reach proficiency status, the district must monitor them for four years. “If they’re not progressing or doing well in general education classes, we’ll look for ways to support those students,” said Sanela Sprecic, the district’s EL program director. “And if they have to be pulled back into interventions or additional language development instruction, we do that too.”



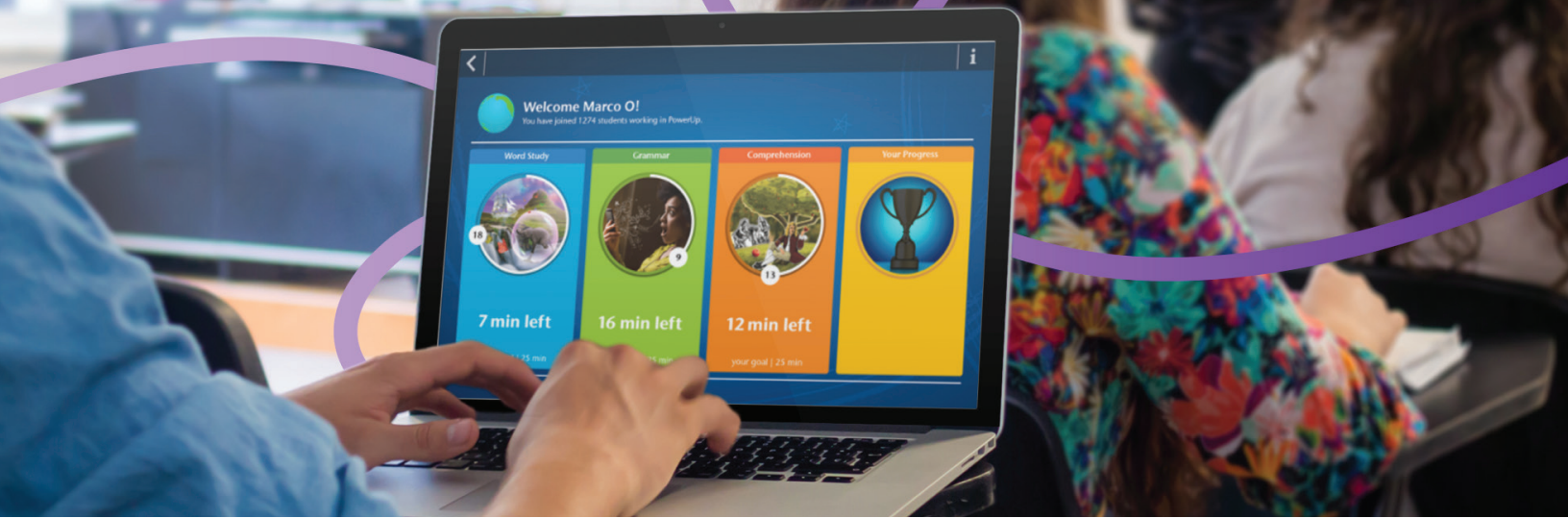
Avoiding Year-3 Burnout

Within the district, the top spoken, non-English languages are Spanish, Nepali, Vietnamese, Kinyarwanda, Bosnian, Burmese, Swahili, Karen, Hakha Chin, and Arabic. “Our students speak over 80 different languages from more than 80 different countries,” Sprecic said.

Unfortunately, some of the district’s ELs were losing motivation around year three of the EL program and needed inspiration to stay on task and engaged with their literacy courses. For the 2022-2023 school year, district leaders wanted to provide something different from what their long-term ELs had been learning during the previous two to three years. “We knew we needed to provide something different in the way of literacy development and give them other tools to use,” Sprecic said. “Lexia® PowerUp Literacy® was one of those tools, so we started implementing it intentionally within our language development classes for students who had been sitting at the proficiency levels and struggling with other programs.”

PowerUp is a technology-based program proven to accelerate literacy gains for students in grades 6–12 who are reading below grade level. It helps educators simultaneously address gaps in fundamental literacy skills while helping students build higher-order skills they need to comprehend, analyze, evaluate, and compare increasingly complex literary and informational texts.

“We wanted to find another option to support the learners who need it past years two or three,” said Melisa Mulder, the district’s secondary ELA intervention coach. “Sanela and I heard about Lexia PowerUp from some other teachers and met with a rep to discuss the options in early-2020.”



Finding the Right Platform

After gathering information about the literacy platform, the district signed up for a pilot with PowerUp, which was initially postponed for one year due to the pandemic.

“Having used programs like Read 180 and System 44, many Kentwood Public Schools’ classrooms also added Lexia® during the 2022–2023 school year,” Mulder said. “This move had a profound, positive impact on middle-school learners.”

“In eighth grade, we were having some behavioral issues popping up because the students were saying, ‘Oh, we’ve already done this program,’” Mulder said. “Lexia PowerUp really helped fill that void. We’ve had some great feedback from teachers and students, both of whom love it.”

Why PowerUp?

Both Mulder and Sprecic appreciate that PowerUp has the aligned lessons and skill builders with every single lesson or unit in its platforms. It also has four “flags,” so if a student has struggled with four different instructional lessons—and if they’re still struggling—the platform delivers the aligned lesson to the teacher’s inbox. “That’s fantastic,” Mulder said.

District teams specifically look at WIDA-proficiency levels to best support students’ language and literacy development needs. Any student who has been scoring between level one to 4.7 is still considered an EL and is eligible to receive English language development (ELD) instruction. “We also look specifically at how they perform with listening, speaking, reading, and writing,” Sprecic said.

Kentwood Public Schools uses a diagnostic assessment and a reading inventory at the secondary level. “It’s these data points, teacher recommendations, and other possible criteria that lead us to choosing a student for PowerUp,” Sprecic said.

For all eligible students, the ELD or intervention class take the place of one of their electives (secondary has two elective hours). “We didn’t want to take away both elective hours,” Mulder explained. “We just take one, and it’s in addition to their core English class, so it’s true intervention.”


46% of Students Hit the Mark Early

According to the district’s midyear reading inventory Mulder noted, 46% of students had already hit their end-of-year Lexile growth goal for the 2022–2023 school year. Each student has a yearly growth goal that’s usually around 50–75 Lexile points and tracked on the reading inventory. Students who are below grade level have more ground to make up, so their individual growth goal could be as high as 250 Lexile points.


“It all depends on where they are with their Lexile at the beginning of the school year. That’s how the program determines what their end-of-year growth goal is,” Mulder said. “When 46% of our students already hit their end-of-year goal midyear of the 2022–2023 school year, we celebrated the heck out of that, and we believe Lexia is an integral reason why.”

Based on surveys and feedback from teachers and students, Mulder and Spreic said Lexia is a much-loved educational tool across the district’s diverse student population. “When I go in and teach in the classroom, the kids are engaged. They clearly enjoy it and that’s a real win in itself,” Mulder said.

Spreic has visited several ELD classrooms, and it warms her heart to watch the students using and engaging with Lexia PowerUp. “These kids have been through a lot. Some of them are refugees, for instance, who really want to learn and feel studious. With Lexia, we have a great tool for helping them stay engaged in something that they really enjoy doing.”

 Discover how [Lexia PowerUp Literacy](#) can accelerate literacy gains in your 6–12 grade students.

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