

CASE STUDY

Investing In Emergent Bilingual Literacy Leads to National Assessment Success

Marietta City Schools, GA

Lexia[®]
ALL FOR LITERACY



An Uncompromising Mission

Marietta City Schools has an uncompromising mission: “To prepare each of our students through academic achievement for life success.” The district’s charter status has allowed educators to pursue instructional innovations and offer focused learning environments.

Over the years, Marietta City Schools, one of Georgia’s first Charter Systems, and an International Baccalaureate World School District, has seen the Emergent Bilingual population grow to more than 1,600 students across the district.



Students who are studying English as their second or even third language come to the classroom with their own history and strengths. The term Emergent Bilinguals recognizes that students’ who are learning English are in the process of becoming bilingual. Students’ origin languages and cultural experiences are an asset that can help them acquire English language skills. As a bilingual or multilingual speaker, these students flourish with a culturally responsive language curriculum. They can continue to build on the foundation they already have in their native language.

“A number of immigrant families move here looking for work. Many of our students are new to the country and have gaps in their formal education,” said Jeff Mosley, executive director of academic programs for Marietta City Schools. Many of these students are economically disadvantaged and face challenges at home such as crowded or unstable housing, he explained.

Jennifer Williams, who coordinates the district’s K–12 English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program and is an assistant principal at Marietta High School, agrees with Mosley that these students face difficult challenges. “There are so many outside factors complicating life for these students,” she said. “Many of them don’t have opportunities to be supported in their education at home.”

The district had been offering sheltered content-area classes with specialized instruction for Emergent Bilingual students, but while students were experiencing growth in their language skills, they were lagging behind on state tests for literacy achievement.

It became clear to both Mosley and Williams that the gaps between students who were successful and those who were struggling were widening, and they needed to change their approach to better help these Emergent Bilingual students become successful learners.

Looking for the Best

“We wanted to find a program to support both language and literacy simultaneously,” Williams said. Because that support varied from school to school, the literacy solution the district chose would need to be flexible enough to support different ESOL instructional models in use across each of its schools. To meet the needs of every student, Williams and Mosley also wanted to find a program that offered personalized learning solutions. Not shy about finding the best, Marietta City Schools required the program to offer implementation support, intervention resources for teachers, and easy-to-use reporting.

After weighing their options, Lexia® Learning’s programs were the clear solution, and district leaders chose to incorporate Lexia® Core5® Reading (for grades pre-K–5) and Lexia® PowerUp Literacy® (for grades 6–12) into the ESOL

programs. Both of these programs are based on the evidence of the science of reading and use an adaptive blended learning model to support educators in differentiating learning for students of all abilities.

As this was a districtwide initiative that needed to be implemented efficiently yet flexibly, Marietta City Schools expanded the Lexia partnership and included a Lexia Implementation Support Package so teachers could hit the ground running with training, data coaching, and ongoing consultation from a dedicated team.

Flexibility and Data on Demand

“One of the benefits of Lexia is flexibility,” Mosley said. “Different schools in our district found different ways of incorporating the programs, based on their unique Emergent Bilingual population. Lexia’s implementation support team

Marietta City Schools ESOL literacy program requirements

- Support language and literacy simultaneously
- Flexible instructional support
- Personalized learning solutions
- Implementation support
- Resources for teachers
- Easy-to-use reporting
- Support students in grades K–12
- Proven to help students of every demographic



helped us pivot and readjust without disruption to the students.”

Both Core5 and PowerUp prescribe online usage targets each week for each student. Since the programs are flexible, teachers are able to choose the best way to fit online usage into students’ schedules: During morning work, rotation centers, literacy centers, or intervention blocks. Lexia’s educator platform, myLexia®, offers easy-to-use reports at the individual, classroom, school, and district levels.

“I use the Lexia reports daily as part of our MTSS process,” Williams said. “I’m constantly monitoring progress and usage data and sharing reports with school principals, assistant principals, and teachers. MyLexia makes it easy to pull the reports and share with staff at the level of detail they need.”

Native Language Support

Lexia’s programs have a key feature specifically for Emergent Bilingual students: The option to hear directions in other languages. While the content is in English, there is a Native Language Support button which allows students to hear instructional directions in their native language after they hear them in English.

“Native language support is a huge benefit for our ESOL students. It gives them the opportunity to feel successful (while engaging in the platform),” Williams noted. “It makes them feel connected to something because they’re understanding what’s being fed to them.”



Barbie Esquijarosa (above) is an ESOL teacher at A. L. Burruss Elementary for students in K-5.

Making the Most of Intervention Time

MyLexia helps teachers make the most of their intervention time with targeted resources for direct instruction. According to Barbie Esquijarosa, ESOL teacher at Burruss Elementary School in Marietta, “The teacher platform is super user-friendly, and provides great on-demand reports, charts, certificates, feedback, and resources.”

Esquijarosa uses Core5 and appreciates that the program assigns skill-specific lessons for teacher-led instruction based on student needs, which gives teachers the opportunity to provide targeted help. And because the lessons are fully scripted, they can also be delivered by paraprofessionals or volunteers, freeing up more teacher time.



Native Language Support

Core5: Arabic, French, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish, or Vietnamese.

PowerUp: Spanish, with additional languages coming soon.



Esquijarosa (above) works with Emergent Bilingual students to support their reading and writing skills.

Celebrating Success and Growth

Esquijarosa was named the district's 2020 Teacher of the Year for her commitment to helping students persevere through challenges and overcome adversity. She said while Core5 is a practical tool that helps her students master reading skills, it's also an opportunity to recognize their achievements. When students complete a level, they receive a printed Lexia certificate.

"We have monthly assemblies, where students receive their certificates, and parents are invited. Being able to give out Lexia awards during assemblies has allowed students who don't normally get awards to have a time to shine in front of the school community," she said.

Assessments Confirm Skills Growth

During the 2018–2019 school year, 1,000 Emergent Bilingual students in Marietta City Schools used Core5, and 88 students in grades 6–12 used PowerUp.



Only 11% of the K–5 Emergent Bilinguals began the year at grade level in Core5. By the end of the year, 90% of these students advanced at least one grade level of content in the program. Sixty-seven percent of the students using the program with fidelity were working at or even above grade level.



The district's results with PowerUp users in grades 6–12 were similar. In PowerUp, students are auto-placed into their appropriate skill levels within three areas: Word Study, Grammar, and Comprehension. In Word Study, 88% of students using PowerUp began in the lowest (Foundational) zone, and by the end of the year, that number reduced to just 28%. In Grammar, 78% in the Foundational zone reduced to 34% and in Comprehension, 58% reduced to 19%.



Lexia Success Translates to NWEA MAP Growth

As a result of these findings, a correlational analysis by Lexia Research compared the district's end-of-year Core5 results to the end-of-year reading proficiency scores in NWEA MAP Growth, a progress-monitoring tool administered three times a year. The analysis found strong, significant, positive correlations between performance in Core5 and MAP at each grade level.

In addition, students' scores at the end of the school year on MAP were aligned with end-of-year performance in Core5. "Last year, 63% of ESOL students met their growth goal, and most of those students used Lexia. I believe that Lexia usage played a big part in that growth percent increase," Esquijarosa said.

Developing a Long-term Partnership

Based on results from the first implementation year, both Mosley and Williams have recommended to other districts that they partner with Lexia. "Our goal was to find a program that supports both language and literacy, and Lexia has demonstrated that support. Our data is reflective of that. It's engaging for students, it's easy for teachers to maneuver and understand, and the support from the corporate level has just been phenomenal," Williams said.

Mosley adds, "Progress monitoring with Lexia is easy. That's refreshing for me as a district administrator, because I need to make sure my principals can access the data they need to support teachers and students. Lexia gave our English Learners an opportunity to experience success in a way that they may not have found outside of this program."

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—JEFF MOSLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, MARIETTA CITY SCHOOLS

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Success: By the Numbers: Core5

Emergent Bilingual students working in or above grade level increased from 11% to 67%

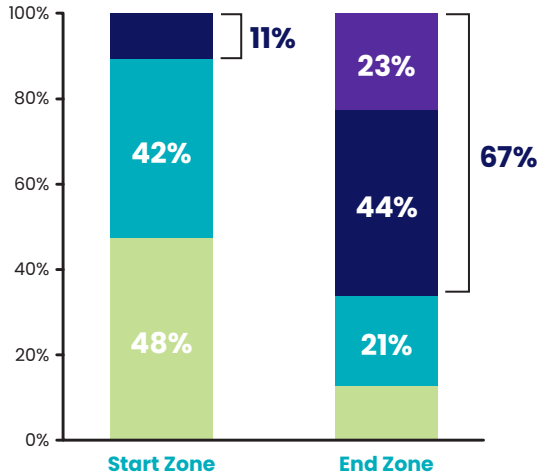


Figure 1. Progress of K-5 Students Using Core5 (N=1,000)

Core5 Grade Level of Skills

- Reached End-of-Year Benchmark
- In Student Grade
- 1 Grade Below
- 2+ Grades Below

Among students with any Core5 usage during the 2018-2019 school year, the percentage of students working below their grade level reduced from 90% to 34%.

Success: By the Numbers: PowerUp

Emergent Bilingual students working at an Intermediate or Advanced level increased across all three strands of learning.

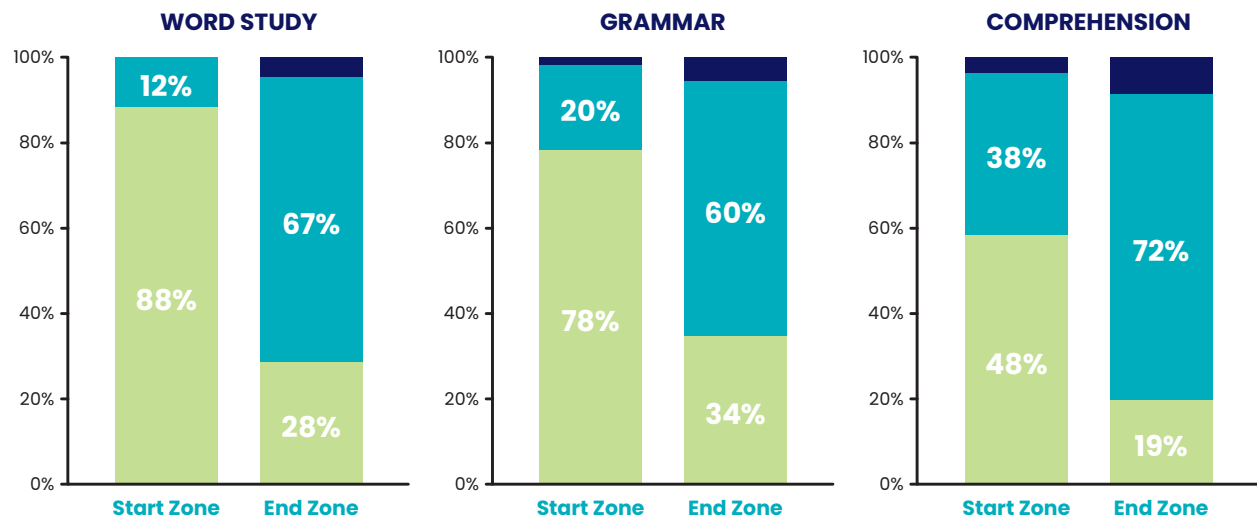


Figure 2. Progress of Students Using PowerUp (N=88)

- Advanced
- Intermediate
- Foundational

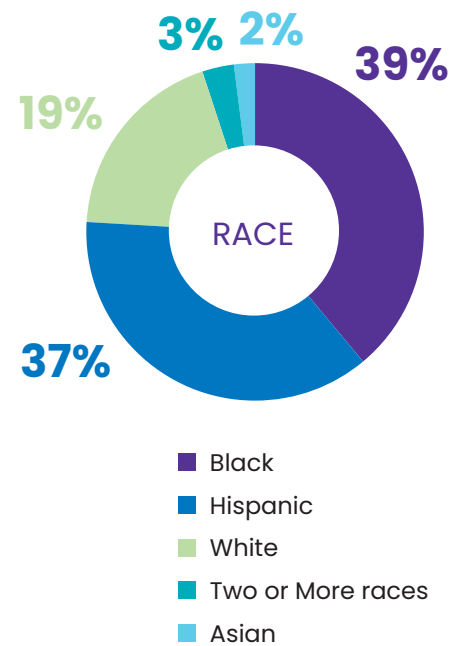
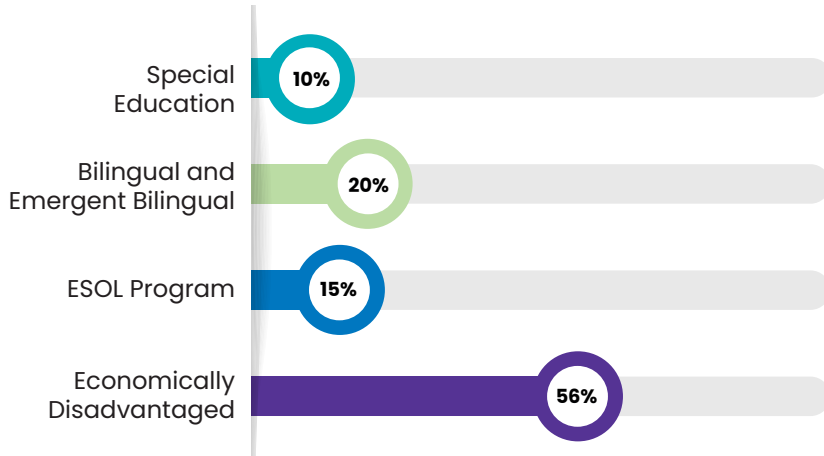


Profile: Marietta City Schools, Marietta, GA

8,900
ENROLLMENT



K-12
GRADES



Fidelity defined as students with more than 20 weeks of use who met their usage targets at least 50% of weeks or reached their end-of-year, grade-level benchmark. N=783

Lexia[®]

Lexia is the Structured Literacy expert. For more than 30 years, the company has focused solely on literacy, and today provides a full spectrum of solutions for both students and teachers. With robust offerings for differentiated instruction, personalized learning, assessment, and professional learning, Lexia helps more learners read, write, and speak with confidence.

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