

CASE STUDY

Next Level Curriculum: Speaking Practice Helps Emergent Bilingual Students in Atlanta

Atlanta Public Schools
Atlanta, GA

Lexia®

Lexia
ENGLISH™
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT





Lexia Case Study: Atlanta Public Schools

Challenge

ESOL students' speaking scores dropped dramatically when the district was required to administer a computer-based speaking assessment.

Solution

The Lexia® English Language Development™ platform is an adaptive blended learning program for Emergent Bilingual students that optimizes their learning experience.

Atlanta, GA

91 learning sites

52,000 students

Results

Students who are meeting their minutes on Lexia English are more likely to score higher on the ACCESS for English Language Learners test.

Atlanta Public Schools District Uses Lexia English to Support Emergent Bilingual Students

As the number of Emergent Bilingual students continues to increase in the U.S., educators and district administrators need more effective ways to ensure better academic outcomes for all learners. After successfully using Lexia® Core5® Reading (Core5) in its elementary schools, Atlanta Public Schools (APS) took its ESOL curriculum to the next level when it implemented Lexia® English Language Development™.

Created for grades K–6, the platform helps Emergent Bilingual students achieve their academic potential. It uses culturally and ethnically diverse characters who engage and encourage students throughout their learning journeys. Interactive academic conversations empower students to build the

linguistic competence and confidence needed for academic success via both standard and scaffolded instruction.

Time for a Change

Amanda Larkin, ESOL District Support Teacher in APS' Multilingual Programs + Services department, says the need for change came about when she realized students were reading English but not speaking it. According to Larkin, she noticed “a huge drop in their speaking scores” after the district was required to utilize a computer-based assessment for speaking.

The issue wasn't that students *weren't* speaking—rather, they were giving one-word answers to questions. For instance, when responding to questions like “What do you see in this picture?” they would simply say “A bus” or “A car” instead of verbalizing the many different components.





The teachers get to really decide; they know the students better than we do.”

— Amanda Larkin, ESOL District Support Teacher

“They just wanted to get it over with and didn’t like the fact that they were talking to a computer that couldn’t communicate back to them,” Larkin explained. It was clear students needed to practice their speaking skills, so Larkin and another teacher created speaking centers, found a program for recording students speaking, and had them read books into it.

Getting Students on Track to Exit

As a longtime user of Core5, Larkin learned about Lexia English and realized that the platform would meet students’ needs and take the burden of ESOL curriculum development off teachers’ shoulders. “Lexia English took all that work away from us, and we were thankful for that,” Larkin said. She began using the new platform with all ESOL students at her school who were on track to exit the program—the “highfliers,” so to speak.

“Then, we started thinking this would be wonderful for our newcomers, who are often completely overwhelmed on using their marginal English skills where they often just sit there stunned at phase one, taking it all in,” Larkin explained.

By putting headsets and microphones on such students before letting them use the computer for learning, Larkin can get them speaking English sooner than they would be if they were working in a classroom filled with students at different levels, thanks to the program’s embedded speech recognition technology.

Giving Teachers Choices

Today, APS uses Lexia English for students in grades K–5. It targets both newcomers and those whose speaking scores don’t align with where they should be, as the program’s purposeful repetition in speaking and listening instills confidence in learners and teaches them transferable language.

When teachers need help making those decisions or engaging students with the platform, Larkin uses the program’s Resources Hub and its plethora of professional development and instructional resources to show instructors how to monitor student progress and intervene as needed.

“The teachers get to really decide; they know the students better than we do,” Larkin explained.



Scoring Higher on State Tests

The strategy is working. According to Larkin, students who are meeting their minutes on Lexia English are more likely to score higher on the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs® test, which is used in Georgia to determine the English language proficiency levels and progress of Emergent Bilinguals in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.


Higher ACCESS scores mean faster exits from APS' ESOL program, which is the ultimate goal. After learners exit from the ESOL program,

“we monitor students for two years, at which point we keep data and tabs on them,” Larkin explained. “Then we kind of take a ‘hands-off’ approach during years three and four, while still paying attention to their progress.”

Students enjoy Lexia English because it allows them to level up—something they’re so proud of that they often share the accolades with their teachers. “We celebrate those wins as a whole ESOL cohort,” Larkin shared. “It’s very important to our students; it’s a big deal to them.”



Lexia Learning, a Cambium Learning® Group company, 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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