

## Los Angeles Unified School District Leaders Power RTI with Lexia Reading®

### *Strong Leadership and Effective Technology Implementation Drive Performance Growth*

In Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), achieving student success requires the alignment of a number of key factors. District leaders, including Kandice McLurkin, are helping to empower dynamic school leaders with the right tools to drive success within a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. In a growing number of LAUSD schools, Lexia Reading is helping principals to develop a strategic and dynamic method for gathering and using assessment data—all while reducing the schools' dependence on traditional testing.

As the driving force behind the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP), Kandice McLurkin's challenge is to provide principals in the district with strategies and tools that will affect dramatic increases in student performance. Focusing initially on ten schools with high concentrations of Standard English Language Learners, Ms. McLurkin has helped principals hone their approach using student data and RTI strategies.

#### **Finding the Last Piece of the Puzzle**

One of the schools Ms. McLurkin supported as the administrative coordinator of AEMP was Lizarraga Elementary. The school's principal, Veronica Moscoso, had led the development of a school culture primed for academic improvement. However, for several years, underwhelming test scores beleaguered the school, despite the fact that Ms. Moscoso had seemingly put all of the right pieces in place.

"Veronica had built a great school culture with teachers and academic programs she had handpicked," said Ms. McLurkin. "Although she had strong buy-in from her teachers, what was missing was a method for easily and accurately identifying her Tier II students for RTI.

"I recommended that Veronica implement Lexia Reading, which gave her additional, accurate student performance data upon which to base her three tiers of instruction," said Ms. McLurkin. "In addition, because of Lexia's real-time student assessment, her teachers were able to pinpoint the individual students' specific skill deficiencies and address those needs on the spot."

After implementing Lexia Reading school-wide, Ms. Moscoso was able to use Lexia Reading's Assessment Without Testing® technology to obtain her universal screening data, and further, was able to gain a clear sense of where every student was within a three-tier instructional model.

Bringing the right technology tools to the table is only half the battle, as Ms. McLurkin points out. Obtaining resources and scheduling use of the schools limited number of computers presented an obstacle.

"It was Veronica's sheer tenacity that made this implementation a success," according to Ms. McLurkin. "In the absence of a computer lab, she found a way to schedule school-wide screening and made tutoring and academic support an integral part of the Lexia implementation.

Ms. Moscoso assigned classroom teachers to support instruction in the schools' Lexia computer lab. When students experienced difficulty in a particular skill—as identified by Lexia Reading—the teacher was able to offer direct instruction to address those skill gaps and then let the students get back to work on their core skills development.

"With support from Lexia, Veronica developed a strategic approach around gathering and using assessment data in an incredibly dynamic environment," continued Ms. McLurkin. "Lizarraga Elementary achieved outstanding results with Lexia

*"Lizarraga Elementary achieved outstanding results with Lexia Reading, making 68 points of growth on the California Academic Performance Index (API). This was a terrific example of putting the right tools in the hands of bright educational leaders to improve student achievement."*

– Kandice McLurkin, LAUSD

Reading, making 68 points of growth on the California Academic Performance Index (API). This was a terrific example of putting the right tools in the hands of bright educational leaders to improve student achievement.

“Veronica’s leadership, determination and problem solving skills have made this RTI process a success,” continued Ms. McLurkin. “When you believe in the process and you believe in the product, you can make great things happen. I am confident that her school will exceed the academic expectations again this year.

### **A Tool to Help Principals Offer Support**

Educators agree that one of the most important components of improving student performance is the manner in which school administrators support and coach their teachers. In her previous role as principal of Cienega Elementary School, Ms. McLurkin saw the power of Lexia Reading’s administrative capabilities firsthand.

“What I love about Lexia Reading is that it allows me the opportunity to see how teachers are using the program with their students,” said Ms. McLurkin.

Lexia Reading provides robust details on student skills performance and usage of the program, which can be aggregated at the individual student, class, school or district-level. Viewable online—as well as on the new MyLexia App for iPhone®, iPad®, and iPod® touch—administrators can access real-time data on students’ specific skill gaps, as well as norm-referenced predictions of each student’s percent chance of reaching the end-of-year benchmark. The program then identifies and prioritizes students for small group or individual instruction, providing educators with targeted instructional strategies and structured lesson plans to help each student improve performance on grade-level assessments. Student performance data is also aggregated at the class, school and district level, providing administrators with the necessary information to support instruction and deploy resources accordingly.

“I could look to see if we were giving students an adequate amount of time on the program,” she said. “Lexia provides recommended use patterns for each tier of instruction in RTI. So, if the recommendation for Tier II students is to use the program for 20 minutes per day 3–4 days per week, then let’s make sure that we’re giving them those minutes. And the result? We’d see those students’ performance indicators move from being yellow (some risk of reading failure) to green (low risk).”

“At the administrator level, this visibility into usage and performance in real-time was invaluable in terms of my ability to support my teaching staff.”

### **Making the Case – How can you afford not to?**

The success that Ms. McLurkin and Ms. Moscoso have experienced with Lexia Reading has principals in the AEMP program and elsewhere in LAUSD insisting that they, too, get the program into their schools. With budget constraints always a challenge, many schools have chosen to implement Lexia Reading as a pilot program.

“Our Lexia representative was instrumental in the success of these pilot programs—you’ve never met anyone more kind and accommodating,” said Ms. McLurkin. “He helped me to brainstorm the best way to implement the program within the constraints of the technology hardware we had available, and he helped to ensure every staff member received sufficient training on the program.”

“By piloting Lexia Reading, this allows principals to demonstrate success with the program,” said Ms. McLurkin. “These pilot schools will find they now have a quick way to assess their whole school without having to take a test. Lexia Reading gives you automatic placement into different tiered instructional bands so that you can be strategic about how you approach RTI. We found that by giving the Tier I students 15 minutes per day really helped. Then, if we increase our Tier II students to nearly 30 minutes a day, with Tier III children receiving upwards of 45 minutes per day, that’s all they’ll need. It is just that effective!”

Following the pilot, most principals find that the answer is clear.

“With the data in hand, you can make the case to your school site councils to invest in Lexia Reading,” concluded Ms. McLurkin. “How can you afford not to?”