



## **LEXIA LEARNING AS AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF ELL EDUCATION**

### **Chinese- and Spanish-speaking Students Succeed with Lexia's Phonics, Sight-words and Decoding Practice**

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- Lisa Kwong  
Assistant Principal  
Gordon J. Lau Elementary School  
San Francisco Unified School District

#### **Profile**

A veteran educator with more than 16 years of experience, Lisa Kwong has been at Gordon J. Lau Elementary School as assistant principal for two years. The school, which is part of the San Francisco Unified School District, has a culturally and ethnically diverse student population, with Chinese (80 percent) and Latino (12 percent) students comprising the largest percentages of the student population. Nearly 75 percent of students are English language learners (ELL) and nearly 85 percent of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. To meet the linguistic and academic needs of their limited English-proficient student, supplemental programs are offered at every grade level to support native Spanish- and Chinese-speaking students.

#### **Challenges**

Upon arriving at her new role at Lau Elementary, Kwong noticed that although most of the student population was doing fairly well, some students were still struggling and were not showing enough progress. Although the school had a high API score (California's measure of academic performance and growth of schools on a variety of academic measures) there was a large percentage of students who were struggling and in a bi-lingual program. The school also had an influx of students who enrolled at the school in third or fourth grade, who had not been exposed to phonics from an early age.

#### **Solution**

To address their needs of supporting ELL students and those in bi-lingual programs, Kwong and Lau Elementary School selected Lexia Learning's *Primary Reading*. The school implemented *Lexia Primary Reading* as a pilot program in 2008, and was used by all reading teachers in the school.

### **Implementation**

“We realized it was a really great program in terms of teaching phonics and sight words,” said Kwong. “Many of our younger kids really responded to it. Primary teachers thought, ‘Wow it is this great program.’ It is sequential and it supplemented what they were teaching in the classroom. Teachers like the progression of it; it really helps students.”

Most students at Lau Elementary who use Lexia spend time on the program once a week. Kwong created intervention programs before school and during recess in order to provide additional time for identified student who are struggling. To qualify for the intervention program, students must be referred by a teacher. Parents can request a spot in the Lexia Support Program for their children by filling out a form and agreeing to bring their child 20 minutes early to school each day.

“Lexia zeros in just on what they need to learn,” said Kwong. “Teachers like the branching technology. The great thing about Lexia is that it is intuitive about student levels and adjusts accordingly.”

The school has 45 students in the intervention program that uses Lexia, with an additional 15 students at lunch time.

### **Results**

“Our kindergarten teachers in particular felt that the formative monitoring data provided by Lexia helped them to support students needs,” said Kwong. “One student, who had scored low on letter recognition skills, was able recognize 12 letters within two months by using the program.”

“We have two newcomer students that have gone through the program quickly and finished all five levels,” said Kwong. “Using the system, they gained the necessary skills of sight-word and letter recognition.”

As evidenced by some of the progress, students found the program challenging but fun. Kwong reported that students showed a sense of accomplishment as they moved from one level to the next.

Overall, the teachers reported that Lexia offered critical practice in decoding and helped prepare students for improved focus on comprehension skills. With targeted practice, branching logic and robust data reports, teachers have come to depend on Lexia.

“If I were to take it away, they’d be mad at me!” said Kwong of teachers’ fondness for Lexia.

### **Conclusion:**

The Lexia program has become an important component in Lau Elementary School’s instructional strategies.

“We’ve been successful in this implementation in part because Lexia is so willing to work with us,” said Kwong. “They are always proactive and available to help with the implementation.”

And the results, Kwong says, speak for themselves. For those schools considering implementing Lexia to address their needs, she says, “Have them come and visit our school and see it working. You have to see it for yourself. If you know kids are enjoying it and learning something from it, then that’s the best sell and the best proof. I don’t have to say too much if they just see it and try it out for themselves.”

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