

Research Brief: Impact of Core5 for Entering English Learners with Low English Proficiency

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Key Findings

- English Learners (ELs) with the lowest language proficiency level on WIDA (i.e., ELs at Level 1 Entering) made substantial gains on the GRADE (a standardized test of reading skills) following two years of Core5 use, ending the second year scoring well within the average range (25th – 75th percentiles) on the test.
- ELs with higher proficiency levels and non-ELs receiving the same Core5 instruction also made gains on the GRADE. However, gains made by Level 1 Entering ELs were larger in magnitude than other students in their grades.

Purpose

Learning to become proficient readers in English presents a major challenge for English Learners (ELs). Recent statistics show that 68% of ELs in 4th grade score below U.S. proficiency levels in reading.¹ This report considers the extent to which use of the Lexia[®] Core5[®] Reading program (Core5) can support reading development for ELs. In particular, the report focuses on how well Core can support ELs who have the greatest needs – those who start school with the lowest level of English language proficiency.

Sample

This analysis examines the reading performance of 175 students attending kindergarten or first grade in a low SES, urban elementary school. There were 25 ELs in the sample. The majority of these students were native speakers of Haitian-Creole. Nine ELs (36%) are highlighted in this report based on scoring at the lowest proficiency level (Level 1 Entering) on the WIDA assessment of English language skills. These students were compared to 16 ELs who scored at higher proficiency levels on the WIDA and 150 non-EL students. All students were taught in classrooms in which Core5 served as the primary form of reading instruction over two school

¹ National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). [Tables of 2017 Reading Scores for Grades 4 and 8 by Demographic]. *2017 Reading Grades 4 and 8 Assessment Report Cards: Summary Data Tables for National and State Average Scores and Achievement Level Results*. Retrieved from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2017/files/2017_Results_Appendix_Reading_State.pdf

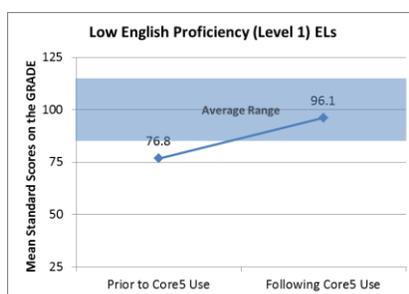
years. Reading performance was assessed using a standardized test (GRADE) prior to Core5 use (Fall 2014) and following Core5 use (Spring 2016).

Program Usage

Students were considered to have met Core5’s online usage requirements if they used the program for at least 20 weeks in a single school year, and if they met their weekly usage targets for 50% or more of those weeks. Over 90% of the students in both grades met program usage requirements during the two school years.

Program Impact

As shown in the Figure, the Level 1 Entering ELs scored below the average range (the equivalent of 25th – 75th percentiles) on the GRADE prior to Core5 use. However, after two years of Core5 use, their scores improved 19.3 standard score points, resulting in a mean score well within the average range.



For reference, Level 1 Entering ELs fared well compared to other students in their grades. The mean standard score gain made by Level 1 Entering ELs (19.3) was larger in magnitude than the mean gain made by ELs with higher proficiency levels (11.8) and the mean gain made by non-ELs (12.6).²

Conclusion

These findings indicate that use of Core5 can be quite beneficial for ELs with limited English language skills. When implemented with fidelity, Core5 provides students with ample opportunity to learn and practice skills tied to their language (e.g., vocabulary) and reading needs. Overall, gains made by ELs with the lowest English proficiency were substantial, ending the second school year scoring well within the average range.

² Differences between reading gains for Level 1 Entering ELs and other groups did not reach significance: $t(23) = 1.3$, $p = .20$, and $t(157) = 1.4$, $p = .15$, for comparisons with ELs who had higher proficiency levels and non-ELs, respectively.