

## PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Data-driven Instruction  
Adaptive Technology  
EL Support

“The program has been a great part of our whole new innovation plan. Core5 helps us create readers and thinkers; our kids deserve that.”

– MONICA DRAPER, PRINCIPAL, BILLIE MARTINEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CO

## Billie Martinez Elementary School Greeley-Evans Weld County School District 6, CO

### Priority Improvement school makes reading proficiency a key element of its turnaround plan

#### Challenge

As a Priority Improvement school, a critical area of focus for Billie Martinez Elementary School was the improvement of student literacy outcomes. With 98% of its students eligible for free and reduced lunch rates, and 85% of pupils speaking a language other than English while at home, the school needed instructional tools that would support teachers in identifying and addressing the wide-ranging literacy needs of their students.

“We never had a true picture of our students’ literacy skill gaps,” comments Alison Ferguson, assistant principal. “Our students come to us with a huge drive for learning. They want to learn. They want to do well. We needed a program that would help us identify the specific skills causing our students to struggle.”

After landing in the second-to-the-bottom tier for six years in a row, Billie Martinez could become a school of innovation, close its doors, or become a charter school. “We took the innovation path,” says Ferguson, whose team presented its plan to the state board last year and, once approved, became a project-based learning state school.

“We weren’t losing ground, but we also weren’t making any progress; something had to change,” Ferguson says. “We can’t expect fifth graders to succeed when half of them can’t even read at grade level.”

#### Solution

As part of its turnaround plan, Billie Martinez wanted to reduce the high number of students who were moving up a grade, but had not yet achieved reading

proficiency at their current grade level. According to DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), only 50% of students were performing at benchmark. The school looked for a technology-based literacy program that would help it fill these skill gaps. In addition, educators lacked the data needed to properly assess—and intervene as needed—the students’ reading progress.

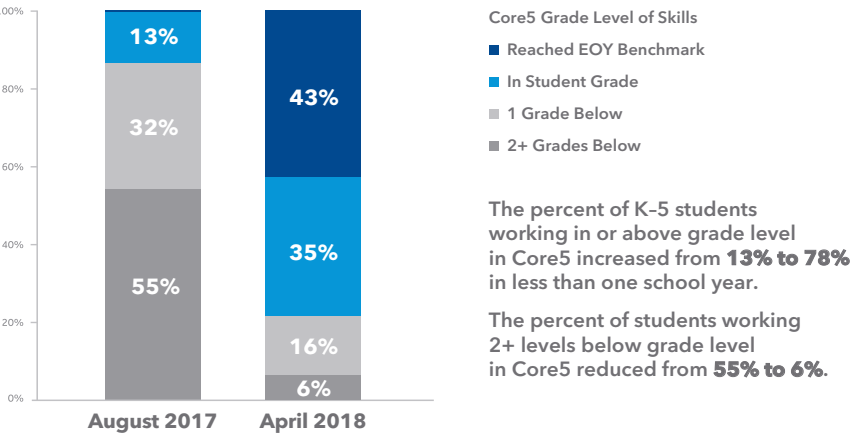
To better assess and address its students’ reading proficiency, Billie Martinez implemented Lexia Reading Core5® for all students. Principal Monica Draper, who used Core5 in her prior school district, was instrumental in bringing the program to the school. “With a new superintendent spearheading a blended learning approach, we had the opportunity to really think outside of the box, engage our students, and help push them forward in their learning,” says Draper. “Lexia supported all of that.”

Today, the use of Core5 varies by grade, with K-3 students using it in a station rotation model and students in grades four and five using it in a 1:1 device environment. Leadership has set the expectation that students will use the program for a minimum of 20 minutes each day, giving students opportunities to meet their individual usage targets recommended by the program. **“Our kids and teachers have really latched onto Core5 and they love it.”** says Draper. **“Our parents like that they can support their children’s learning by helping them access the program outside the classroom.”**

Boasting strong student usage of Core5 and teachers regularly checking data provided by the program, the school awarded 2,345 “certificates of achievement” to students during its first year of using Core5. Those certificates can also be printed in Spanish—a Core5 feature that allows students to share their accomplishments with their non-English speaking parents.

Core5 outpaces the programs teachers were previously using for curriculum and assessment. “We noticed that a lot of our students had gaps and holes when it came to sounds and phonics,”

Figure 1. Progress of Students Meeting Usage (N=477)



says Kelsey Crosgrove, third-grade teacher. **“Lexia helps us identify exactly what level they’re on and what they need to be working on while also supporting students who ‘move faster’ and are working on higher-level skills.”**

Results

Since implementing Core5 in the fall of 2017, Billie Martinez has increased the number of students working in or above grade level in Core5 from just 13% to 78%. The number of students working 2+ grade levels below their year in Core5 reduced from 55% to 6%. Kindergarten teacher Danielle Switzer says 30 of her 32 students are currently working in first-grade reading levels in Core5 and feels that the program helps strengthen the classroom as a whole, even though individual students are learning at different paces. “Anytime someone passes a level, all of the kids run up and congratulate him or her with a ‘good job.’ We have a lot of those small celebratory moments in here,” says Switzer. “That’s really helped to create a stronger classroom community.”

Fifth-grade teacher Susan Knoeckel says **Core5 has been extremely beneficial for her students, many of whom were entering her class with lower-than-average reading proficiency. Being able to identify student skill gaps early has helped her deliver more individualized instruction to specific students.** “Core5 broadens the ability of the classroom and helps us identify holes that we weren’t previously aware of,” says Knoeckel.

Over the last year, the program has given an overall lift to students’ self-esteem and the belief that “they can do it.” Because educators can see the student progress on their Core5 dashboards, they get excited about the growth their students are experiencing and look for new and different ways to engage their classes. **“The program has been a great part of our whole new innovation plan,”** says Draper. **“Core5 helps us create readers and thinkers; our kids deserve that.”**

Billie Martinez  
Elementary School

- Enrollment 575
- Grades K-5
  - Latino 92%
  - White 4%
  - Other 4%
  - English Learners 85%
  - Free/Reduced lunch 98%
- Urban Location

<sup>1</sup> Students using Core5 with fidelity over at least 16 weeks of use (N=477) from 8/24/2017–4/28/18