

CASE STUDY

# Sixty-two Percent of Students in One Texas School District Leveled Up with Core5

United Independent School District, Laredo, Texas



## Texas School District Supports its Bilingual Learners with Lexia Core5

Second grade is a transition year for the English Language Learners at United Independent School District (ISD) in Laredo, Texas. It's the point where students transition to using English fully, and it's something the district supports across 30 different campuses, each of which serves about 600 students.

At United ISD, four elementary coordinators oversee about eight different campuses each. In 2021, most of that oversight happened virtually due to the pandemic, when about 90% of students were learning remotely.

"We wanted to make sure that those students were getting the right reading skill opportunities to practice, not only with a teacher when they weren't remote, but also using a program that was going to reinforce those skills," said Maria Arámbula-Ruiz, bilingual director in the district's curriculum and instruction department.

To achieve this goal, the team of elementary coordinators worked with the curriculum instruction department to secure the funds needed to roll out an initial implementation of the Lexia® Core5® Reading adaptive blended learning program.

With a special emphasis on the 2,400 second-grade students—of which 1,549 were Emergent Bilingual learners—who were reaching their reading milestones, the district began using Core5 for the 2019–20 school year with those students.

"We wanted to try out the program first," Arámbula-Ruiz said, "and see what it had to offer."

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—Bilingual Director Maria Arámbula-Ruiz, United Independent School District, Laredo, Texas

## Small-Group Instruction

After receiving virtual training on their new reading platform around the time COVID-19 emerged, the schools' reading intervention teachers/language acquisition aides identified which students needed the highest level of intervention. They assembled a small-group instruction approach based on Lexia's teacher resources.

"Language acquisition aides would pull out a group of students virtually to provide that instruction for them," Arámbula-Ruiz explained. The four elementary bilingual coordinators created virtual Google Classrooms to meet with the language acquisition aides to review school reports. This exercise helped them identify skills the aides would target with those students.

For the first semester Core5 was in use, the district selected two groups of 10 students each to start using the platform. "Our approach was tailored to help the kids, campuses, and coordinators," Arámbula-Ruiz said. "Our goal was to make it very easy for them."

## Districtwide Rollout

For the remainder of the school year, United ISD continued with its Lexia Core5 intervention for 60 minutes per week, with individual campus leaders choosing how they wanted to allocate that time. The district's four coordinators regularly met with the language acquisition aides to review the usage reports and performance data for each campus.

"We made sure that the kids were logging in and retained data at the campus level for usage and performance," Arámbula-Ruiz said. "We also provided the district leadership team with the data from the beginning, middle, and end of the year."

The results were consistently positive. Even during remote learning, about 65% of students were logging into and using Core5. "That, to us, was phenomenal, because 90% of our students were learning virtually," Arámbula-Ruiz said. "We also saw that 65% of those who used the program advanced at least one or more grade level."

District leaders were particularly impressed with the gains made by second-grade students who were working hard to acquire a new language, with most of them speaking Spanish at home.

"Overall, we found our Core5 initiative to be very successful," Arámbula-Ruiz added. "And because of the results data that we shared with district administrators; the decision was made to do a districtwide implementation of Core5 for all grade levels for the 2021-2022 year—that's 18,441 pre-K–fifth-grade students benefiting from the Core5 program."

## 'It's Magnificent'

Elementary Coordinator Pearl Sanchez said she really likes the amount of data generated by the Core5 platform. "I've had the opportunity to really look into that data and it's magnificent," Sanchez said. "It delves into the detailed skills that the children need and is very specific."

Sanchez also likes how the platform is "very individualized" and built up from the child's own starting point. "Core5 provides different levels of support," Sanchez said. "If a student is having a difficult time with short vowels, Core5 will scaffold so that he or she can be successful in that lesson before moving up into the next one."

Cindy Lopez, elementary coordinator, likes the high level of support the district gets from Lexia®. "They're always there helping us out and working on issues quickly. That's what we want because as coordinators, we're that customer service for our own campuses," Lopez said. "That's where Lexia stands out."

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