



RESEARCH BRIEF

Validity Report for Core5 and the SBAC Assessment

Lexia® Core5® Reading
Research Report

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Introduction

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 36% of fourth-grade students in the United States performed at or above the Proficient level in reading on the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress. Only 18–21% of Black and Hispanic students performed at the Proficient level. It is well known that reading difficulties can pose major barriers to academic success. Thus, it is essential students receive research-based instruction within a valid reading program.

This report documents the validity of the Lexia® Core5® Reading (Core5) technology-based instructional program as a measure of reading ability. A program's level of validity relates to whether it effectively measures what it claims to measure. The validity of Core5 was evaluated and strong relationships were found with an established reading assessment. Based on these findings, stakeholders can confidently adopt Core5 as an essential part of their school's literacy program.

Overview of Lexia Core5 Reading

Core5 is designed to accelerate student mastery of reading skills in grades pre-K–5. In the online component of Core5, students develop essential literacy skills in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, structural analysis, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The program provides guidance for using offline teacher-led lessons and student-led activities to increase automaticity and help students generalize the skills they have learned.

When students begin Core5, an auto placement feature determines an appropriate start level in the program. Students who used Core5 during the previous school year continue where they left off in the spring. In the program, students must achieve 90%–100% accuracy to advance to the next level. Students are considered to have reached their end-of-year, grade-level benchmark once they have completed all Core5 content that corresponds to their grade level.

Core5 Performance Measures

Performance Predictor Scores

As a component of Lexia's embedded Assessment Without Testing® tool, students receive a monthly Performance Predictor score which estimates their percent chance of reaching their end-of-year (EOY), grade-level benchmark in Core5. Predictor scores are derived from formulas based on norm-referenced data that vary by student grade and month. These formulas contain up to five Core5 performance variables (e.g., Core5 level, cumulative minutes of Core5 use, etc.). A Predictor score can be interpreted as follows: "If this student continues to work at a similar pace and amount of time as in previous months, his/her chance of reaching EOY, grade-level benchmark is ## percent."

Predictor scores are organized into three risk levels: On Target (80–99%), Some Risk (31–79%), and High Risk (1–30%). Based on their risk level and grade, students are given a weekly usage target (20–80 minutes) that is updated monthly. Consistently meeting usage targets and making progress in Core5 increases the likelihood students will reach their EOY, grade-level benchmark. Thus, Predictor scores may change over time as a result of providing sufficient access to Core5 and individualizing instruction for Some Risk and High Risk students.

For the correlation analyses, Predictor scores were selected for two time points based on typical school assessment schedules:

Beginning-of-Year Predictor Score: Based on Core5 performance through the end of October and provided on November 1st.

Middle-of-Year Predictor Score: Based on Core5 performance through the end of January and provided on February 1st.

Benchmark Status

Benchmark status is based on whether students have or have not reached their EOY, grade-level benchmark in Core5. Students are considered to have reached their EOY, grade-level benchmark once they have completed all Core5 content that corresponds to their grade level. For example, students in grade 1 who have completed material through Level 9 in Core5 by the end of the school year have reached their benchmark.

Key Terms

Validity is the degree to which an assessment (or program) measures what it claims to measure. The term validity is similar to *accuracy*. For example, one could ask, “How *accurately* does my school’s reading assessment measure reading ability?” If an assessment is valid, we can draw conclusions about the ability it measures. In this document, we consider **criterion validity**, which compares the Core5 performance measures with an established measurement tool.

Correlation is a statistical test used to evaluate criterion validity. It quantifies the strength of the relationship between two sets of measures for the same individuals. In most cases, criterion validity correlations will be positive (i.e., range between 0 and 1). A positive correlation indicates that individuals who have high scores on one measure tend to have high scores on the second measure, and individuals who have low scores on one measure tend to have low scores on the second measure. Correlations can be categorized into three ranges: *High*: .7–.9; *Medium*: .4–.6; and *Low*: 0–.3.

Correlations in the medium or high range are considered **strong** when evaluating a reading assessment (or program). A strong correlation indicates that measures obtained from the reading assessment are related to measures obtained from the established measurement tool. Accordingly, one can conclude the reading assessment is a valid measure of reading ability.

Alignments show that two sources of information—such as content areas or performance categories—correspond with each other. This report further evaluates validity of an instructional program by aligning program performance with proficiency categories on an outside assessment.

Types of Assessment Tools

Progress-monitoring tools are used to assess student performance over time and to quantify response to instruction. They are relatively quick to administer and are given multiple times throughout the school year, usually more frequently for high-risk students.

Outcome measurement tools are most often annual assessments with the purpose of obtaining an overall index of ability. They take longer to administer and are typically given at the end of the school year.

Validity of Lexia Core5 Reading with the SBAC Assessment

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) created the Smarter Balanced assessment system. The SBAC system serves as an outcome measurement tool, providing an end-of-year assessment for English Language Arts (ELA) based on a Performance Task and a Computer-Adaptive Test. Students receive an overall ELA scaled score that ranges from 2000 to 3000 across grade levels. The following sections present correlations between Core5 performance measures and SBAC scaled scores, as well as descriptive statistics that illustrate the alignment between Core5 performance and SBAC standards.

Sample

Measures were collected from 31 public schools located in two large districts in California. Each school contributed SBAC scores for a minimum of 150 students. Students in the analyses used Core5 for at least 20 weeks during the 2015–2016 school year, and they met usage targets for at least 50% of their weeks of use. Analyses were based on a total of 5,192 students across grades 3–5.

Results

Correlations. To assess criterion validity, correlations were obtained between end-of-year (EOY) Core5 Benchmark status and SBAC scaled scores for each grade. All pairwise correlations were significant ($p < .001$) and fell within the medium (.4–.6) range, which is considered strong when evaluating a reading assessment (or program).

End-of-Year Correlations Between Core5 Benchmark Status and SBAC Scaled Scores			
Grade	3	4	5
ρ	.5	.6	.5
N	2,300	1,724	1,168

Note. ρ = Spearman's rank correlation coefficient or rho.

Alignment between Core5 and SBAC at End-of-Year. The following table shows how well students with On Target Predictor scores in Core5 (from BOY and MOY) performed on SBAC. The publishers of the SBAC assessment created four performance categories: standard not met, standard nearly met, standard met, and standard exceeded. We considered the top-three performance categories—nearly met, met, or exceeded standards—to represent proficiency. Please see the “Validity of Core5 Performance Predictor Scores” report for details on criteria used for proficiency categories. Of the students who had On Target Predictor scores in Core5 at BOY or MOY, 86–89% reached proficiency on SBAC at EOY.

Alignment Between Core5 On Target Predictor Scores and SBAC Proficiency Categories				
Core5 ¹	SBAC			
On Target in EOY	Did Not Meet Standards	Nearly Met Standards	Met/Exceeded Standards	Reached Proficiency
N = 2,169	14%	26%	60%	86%
On Target in MOY	Did Not Meet Standards	Nearly Met Standards	Met/Exceeded Standards	Reached Proficiency
N = 1,762	12%	26%	63%	89%

The next table shows the alignment between Core5 benchmark status and performance on SBAC at the end of the school year. Of the students who reached EOY, grade-level benchmark in Core5, 86% reached proficiency on SBAC. Notably, the 58% of students who reached Core5 benchmark and Met/Exceeded standards on SBAC was higher than the percentage of students who Met/Exceeded standards on SBAC across the state of California in the same year (43–49% for grades 3–5).

Alignment Between Core5 Benchmark Status and SBAC Proficiency Categories				
Core5	SBAC			
Reached EOY Benchmark	Did Not Meet Standards	Nearly Met Standards	Met/Exceeded Standards	Reached Proficiency
N = 2,549	14%	28%	58%	86%

Conclusion

This report found Core5 performance measures are valid indicators of reading ability based on comparisons with an established outcome measurement tool. The significant correlations between Core5 performance measures and SBAC scaled scores at the end of the year provide evidence the program is a valid measure of reading ability. Additionally, when students are On Target or reach benchmark, their performance in Core5 is associated with proficiency on SBAC. These findings show Core5 is a valid measure of reading ability and Core5 can serve not only as an instructional program, but as a key component in a school's assessment of literacy skills.

¹ All 5,192 students in the sample had BOY Predictor scores with 2,169 (42%) On Target. MOY Predictor scores were available for 4,617 students with 1,762 (38%) On Target.

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