



RESEARCH IMPACT REPORT

Core5 Benefits Students in Utah

Outcomes from 8 Years of Utah's Early Intervention
Reading Software Initiative

Key Findings

- Core5 has become the most preferred program in Utah's Early Intervention Reading Software initiative. In 2022-23, Core5 was used by nine times more students than the average of other reading programs.
- Core5 students met program usage targets to a greater extent than all other programs in three of the four years in which program comparisons were made.
- Core5 significantly impacted students' performance on tests of reading achievement in grades K-1 with large to medium effect sizes across all eight years of the initiative.
- In the four years that the initiative included all students in grades 2-3, Core5 had a significant impact in these grades with medium effect sizes.

Introduction

In 2015, the state of Utah introduced the Early Intervention Reading Software initiative to supplement student learning with the support of edtech programs. Here we review findings of the initiative through the 2022-23 school year. In school years starting 2015-2018, the edtech programs were used with all students in grades K-1 and with students at risk for reading difficulties in grades 2-3. Starting with the 2019-20 school year, all students in grades K-3 were included in the initiative.

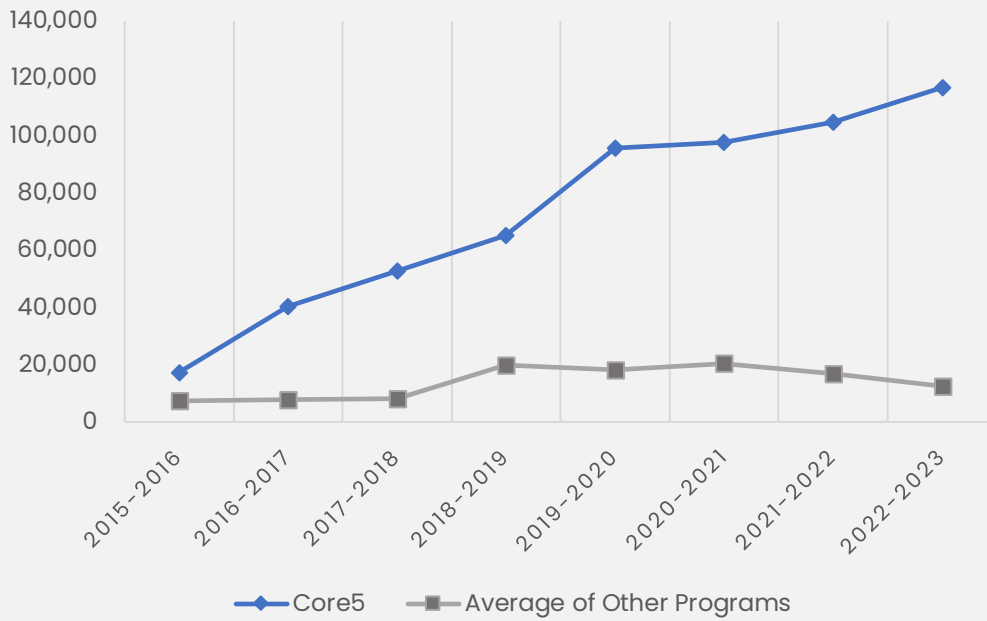
The Evaluation and Training Institute (ETI) has served as an ongoing external evaluator, assessing students' program usage and impact the programs have had on students' learning outcomes. Usage and impact data were reported separately for each program in six of the seven years. The only exception was the pandemic disrupted 2019-20 school year when outcomes were based on half-year implementations and aggregated over programs.¹ Here we highlight outcomes from the ETI reports that focus on Core5.

Program Selection

Each year, schools participating in the Utah initiative selected among four to eight reading programs. Statewide penetration for Core5 increased year after year, and it has become by far the most preferred program in the initiative. When the initiative first began, 17,346 students used Core5, and the average of the other programs was 7,364 students. During the 2022-23 school year, **Core5 was used by 116,789 students. This is nine times more than the average of the other programs (12,419), and four times more than the next preferred program (24,127).**

¹ For this brief, the 2019-20 school year will be referred to as the pandemic year.

Number of Students Using Core5



In 2022-23,
104,370 more students used Core5 than the average of other programs.

Program Usage

ETI analyzed usage data separately for each program except the pandemic year. Overall, students using Core5 met program usage targets to a greater extent than students using other programs.

Pre-pandemic years (2015-16 – 2018-19). **In three of the four years, Core5 was ranked as the top program in percentage of students meeting usage targets.** The only exception was 2015-16 when Core5 ranked second in percentage of students meeting usage targets.

Post-pandemic years (2020-21 – 2022-23). In each post-pandemic year, percentage of students meeting usage targets was higher for Core5 than outcomes reported for all programs combined. ETI did not provide percentages for individual programs in post-pandemic year reports.

Results from the data on program usage highlight the strength of Lexia Success Partnerships which were provided to schools that selected Core5 in the Utah initiative.

Learning Outcomes

ETI reported learning outcomes separately for each program except the pandemic year. Learning outcomes were based on two achievement tests that assess reading fluency – DIBELS (2015-16 – 2019-20) and Acadience Reading (2020-21 – 2022-23). Overall, Core5 had a significant impact on students’ literacy scores in each year of the Utah initiative.

Grades K and 1. Prior to the pandemic, **Core5 students showed significant gains in reading scores relative to control students in all four years for grade K and three of four years for grade 1.** Averaged over years, effect sizes were large in grade K and medium in grade 1 (see Table below).

During the pandemic year, learning outcomes were aggregated across all programs used in the initiative. It was found that students using the programs showed significant reading gains relative to control students in both grades K and 1. Effect sizes were large for grade K and medium for grade 1. Given that Core5 was by far the most popular program during the pandemic year, these outcomes mainly reflect the impact of Core5.

Effect Sizes for Significant Outcomes²

	Grade K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Pre-Pandemic Years ³				
2015-16 – 2018-19	0.25	0.10	-	-
Pandemic Year ⁴				
2019-20	0.33	0.13	0.07	0.17
Post-Pandemic Years				
2020-21 – 2022-23	0.37	0.19	0.06 ⁵	0.16

Kraft (2020) offers the following benchmarks for interpreting effect sizes of education interventions: <0.05 = Small; 0.05-0.19 = Medium; >0.20 = Large.

² Shown for pre- and post-pandemic years are average effect sizes collapsed over years.

³ See text for why outcomes in grades 2 and 3 are omitted for pre-pandemic years.

⁴ Though these results were aggregated over programs, they mainly reflect the impact of Core5.

⁵ This average does not include the 2022-23 school year. ETI did not include effect sizes in reports if outcomes for a grade were not statistically significant.

In the three post-pandemic years, Core5 students again showed significant reading gains in grades K and 1. Averaged over years, effect sizes were large and medium for grades K and 1, respectively. Together, these findings show that Core5 had a strong impact on the reading achievement of students in grades K and 1.

Grades 2 and 3. In the pre-pandemic years, students in grades 2 and 3 were included in the initiative only if they were at-risk for reading difficulties. A limitation of this approach was pointed out in ETI's 2017-18 report: with only at-risk students included in both treatment and control groups, control students "were also likely to be identified by a teacher or school as needing help.... If control students had alternative reading interventions, such as tutoring, after school programs, or other types of support, then we would not necessarily expect to see a treatment effect." In the pre-pandemic years, treatment effects were sparse in grades 2 and 3. Over the four years, 23% and 15% of programs in the initiative had significant reading gains in grades 2 and 3, respectively. Core5 showed no significant gains in grade 2 and one significant gain in grade 3.

In contrast to the pre-pandemic years, all students in grades 2 and 3 were included in the initiative during the pandemic year and outcomes were aggregated across programs. Treatment students showed significant reading gains with medium effect sizes in both grades 2 and 3. Given that Core5 was by far the most popular program during the pandemic year, these significant outcomes mainly reflect the impact of Core5.

Like the pandemic year, all students in grades 2 and 3 were included in the initiative during the post-pandemic years. Outcomes were reported separately for each program. **Core5 had a significant positive impact on reading scores in all three years for grade 3 and one year for grade 2.** Averaged over years, effect sizes were medium for both grades. Outcomes from the pandemic and post-pandemic years show favorable effects of Core5 for students in grades 2 and 3.

Want to Learn More?

For more information about the Utah initiative, see ETI's reports for the school years [2016-2017](#), [2017-2018](#), [2018-2019](#), [2019-2020](#), [2020-2021](#), [2021-2022](#), and [2022-2023](#).

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