

CASE STUDY

# Science of Reading Literacy Program is the Best 'Bang for the Buck'

Northeast Elementary School,  
Meridian, Mississippi



## Finding Support and Resources

When it comes to reading skills, third grade is a crucial time—students should be transitioning from learning to read, to reading to learn. At Northeast Elementary School in Meridian, Mississippi, those skills are measured by the Grade 3 reading test.

With a diverse student population, Principal Anita Wansley and Academic Coach Lisa Shelly recognized they needed help to improve students' early literacy skills. "We weren't as prepared as we needed to be," Shelly said. "We had to dig deeper to prepare our K–2 students."

The school began working with the Barksdale Reading Institute to improve students' reading abilities through the Literacy for Leaders program. This partnership supported the school's growing focus on the science of

reading and phonemic awareness and phonics skills. In fact, the new focus on the science of reading helped educators better emphasize skills across all five pillars of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

It was through the Institute that Wansley and Shelly learned of Lexia® Core5® Reading and the role it could play in helping their young students prepare for the mandated reading test. In addition to online practice, Core5's learning materials also support targeted, teacher-led instruction and include offline skill builders and lessons. With the Institute's help, Northeast educators began using Core5 in January 2020, filling the gap they had been experiencing in the K–1 reading program.



## School Support for Core5 Success

Even though the initial intent was to address below-level K-1 readers, Lexia® soon became an important resource to develop K-4 students' reading skills across the entire elementary school.

While some teachers were initially hesitant, seeing the program as just "one more thing" to do, they soon changed their minds. The targeted "next-step" recommendations and real-time data that took some of the workload off teachers' plates was well received. And with differentiated instruction and a rigorous scope and sequence, it was clear that Core5 wasn't just another intervention program—it would help all students grow their skills. Wansley recalled, "By the end of the 2020-2021 school year, one particular teacher expressed that she loved it for both on-grade-level and above-grade-level students, too."

To highlight the impacts of Core5 on students, the school celebrates all students who level up with certificates and treats delivered to their rooms for them to take home to show their parents what they have mastered. This is an important component for parental and family involvement. To celebrate whole school growth, a large bar graph is displayed in the main hallway showing the percentage of students working on or above grade level each month.

In addition, the school created the 21 Club, aligning with the Core5 program's 21 levels. Students who complete the program's grade-level content are highlighted through the 21 Club. "It's a big deal for anyone to get to level 21,

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Core5 has 21 levels across six core components of reading. Each level includes five activities that are then divided into 6-20 different units.

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which isn't just for struggling learners," Wansley said. "We rolled into the 21 Club by chance when our first students achieved that goal." The 21 Club encourages student achievement, as students can be recognized on social media and through congratulatory messages to the student's parent(s).

## Measuring the 'WINS'

To accomplish their reading goals, Northeast Elementary educators set time aside daily for "WIN" or "What I Need" time during the day. This is when each grade level focuses on interventions and enrichment. Some teachers use Core5 during WIN while others use it during their regular class instruction time as part of a center. The follow-up for Core5 small-group lessons and individual skill builders can also take place either during reading instruction or during WIN time.

Before the school implemented Core5, the district's online reading program had students repeat a failed lesson without any additional, differentiated instruction. With Core5, students get personalized instruction that is scaffolded to their needs. This approach helps all learners tackle tougher reading assignments without fear of failure. "With Core5, when students

encounter a challenging lesson or new material, they're able to get additional instruction so the learning continues and advances our students' reading abilities," Wansley said.

This is helpful because it pushes students who are on or above grade level to explore new concepts and reach beyond their boundaries. "The Core5 lessons are presented a couple of different ways," she continued, "and are broken down and simplified so that they can 'get it' and actually learn it the first time out, versus having to wait until the second or third time around."



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—Principal Anita Wansley, Northeast Elementary School, Meridian, Mississippi

## Insight for Stakeholders

Wansley said the school has also benefited from the data and reporting Core5 provides for teachers, administrators, and parents. "It's not something you just put students on and 'hope' that they get it," she explained. "The reporting alone is helpful for parents to be able

to understand their children's reading levels and provide support at home. The benefits of that parental participation can be huge."

At the end of 2020–2021, when Northeast's administration was making critical decisions concerning students' readiness for the next grade, administrators had a reliable pool of data to work from when helping them make those critical decisions. "As teachers and administrators, we can't only pay attention to our intuition," Wansley said, "but we also need to use data. Core5 provided meaningful, actionable data for those discussions and helped to make those challenging decisions."

Knowing that Core5 was providing an excellent return on investment and helping her school achieve its reading goals, Wansley found a way to fund the program moving forward after the initial grant expired. Northeast students would continue to strengthen their foundational reading skills with Core5 and during the 2021–2022 school year, 93% of students advanced at least one grade level.

"As principals and administrators, there's a lot of great stuff out there and we have to figure out what we have the budget for. It's about the bang for the buck," Wansley said. "I would highly recommend Core5 because it works exceptionally well and is easy to use."

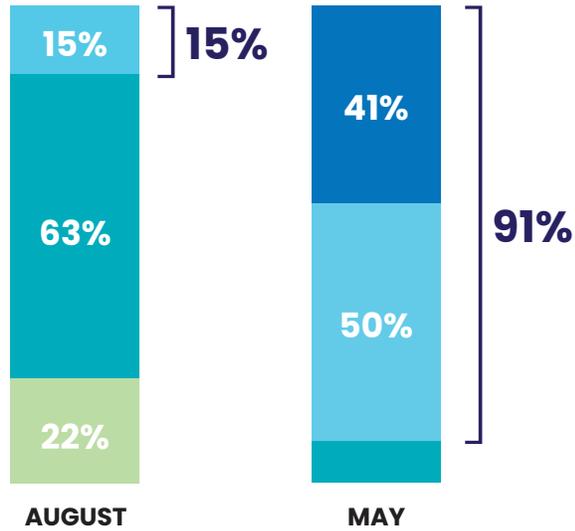
See what Core5 can do for your students.

Self-guided demo >>

## Success By the Numbers

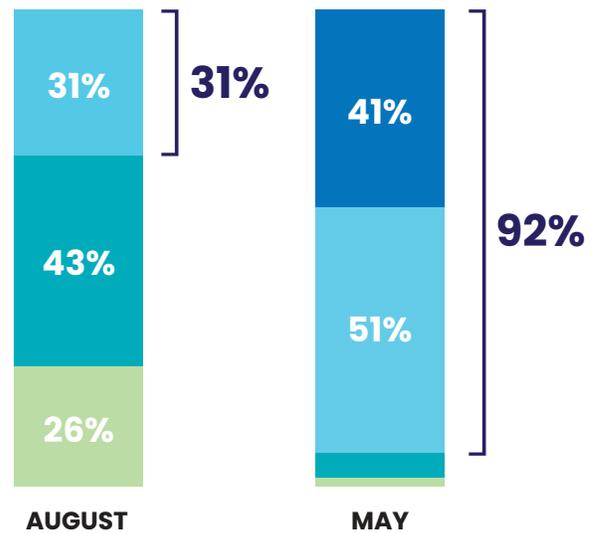
Students working at or above grade level increased from 15% to 91% in the first full academic year of use.

**Northeast Elementary School student progress through the Barksdale Research Institute grant.**



**Figure 1. Progress in Core5 During 2020–2021 for Meeting Usage Students (N=540)**

**Northeast Elementary School student progress post-grant.**

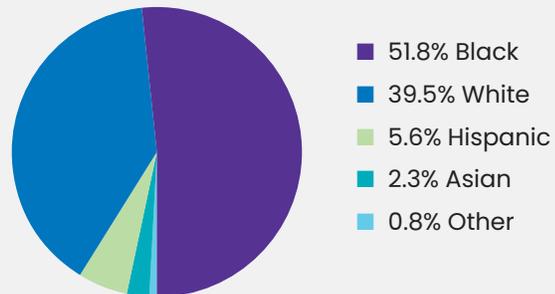


**Figure 2. Progress in Core5 During 2021–2022 for Meeting Usage Students (N=537)**

Core5 Grade Level of Skills: ■ Reached EOY Benchmark ■ In Student Grade ■ 1 Grade Below ■ 2+ Grades Below

### Northeast Elementary School

Grades: K–4  
Enrollment: 640





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