

CASE STUDY

Strong Leadership Drives Charter School Literacy Gains

Clay Charter Academy
Charter Schools USA, Florida



Unacceptable Reading Levels

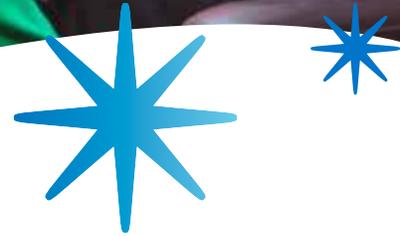
When Principal Talya Taylor joined Clay Charter Academy just two weeks before the end of the school year, she discovered that almost half (49%) of the students were reading below grade level. In some grades, almost three-quarters of students (70%) were reading below grade level. “As a former reading teacher, I understood the gravity of the challenge facing our students if these deficiencies were not addressed,” she said. “Students have to master literacy skills in the elementary grades because the work gets more difficult, the text gets more complex, and skill gaps are harder to close once students get to middle school.”

Many of Taylor’s teachers were new to teaching and had varying degrees of experience in literacy instruction. With that in mind, she wanted to support her teachers with data and instructional resources that would help them drive instruction, regardless of their experience. To help both students and teachers, Taylor needed a literacy solution that would accelerate students’ development of fundamental literacy skills as well as identify any needs as they emerged.



“I’m a believer in this program because, bottom line, Core5 is changing students’ lives.”

—Talya Taylor, Principal,
Clay Charter Academy, Middleburg, Florida



A Path to Proficiency Emerges

Taylor soon discovered a possible solution was within easy reach. Earlier that year, the school had purchased Lexia Reading Core5®, an adaptive blended learning literacy program for students of all abilities in grades pre-k–5. However, the program had not been implemented with fidelity of use, so she decided to evaluate it herself.

As an experienced literacy instructor, Taylor was well qualified to review the pedagogy behind Core5. Learning to read is a complicated process, and she was impressed by the program’s scope and sequence, as well as its systematic approach to instruction. Core5 covered the six different areas of reading she knew her students needed, from phonological awareness to structural analysis to comprehension.

When looking at the educator platform, Taylor found that Core5 would also meet the needs of her teachers. The adaptive technology would enable all teachers to provide differentiated

instruction for each student, moving them toward reading proficiency.

She also recognized that the Core5 Assessment Without Testing® technology would provide valuable, real-time data to help her teachers prioritize and plan instruction. The progress-monitoring data is collected as students work independently online and is immediately available to teachers to guide instruction. Teachers would have access to Core5’s scripted, offline instructional materials to use with individual students or small groups to address any skills that required additional practice.

At the start of the next school year, Taylor talked with teachers and observed students using Core5. “After researching the program over the summer and then seeing the impact on students, I was sold. Core5 is a powerful program that helps students who are learning to read as well as those who are struggling,” commented Taylor.

Getting Everyone on Board

Principal Taylor established the expectation that all K–5 students would meet their Core5 recommended usage targets and teachers would use Core5 resources as part of their instruction. “As educators, we have to do everything in our power to help every student read on grade level,” she stated. In only six months, 89% of students in grades K–5 were meeting their recommended usage in Core5 and the percentage of students who were working at or above grade level increased dramatically from 40% to 82% (see Figure 1).

To support her teachers and to ensure fidelity, Taylor purchased additional Core5 training from Lexia and encouraged all of her teachers—even those familiar with the program—to attend. Third grade teacher Lindsay Perry, who was new to Clay Charter but had previously used Core5, said “I knew Core5 was a terrific program and couldn’t wait to use it again. I found it helpful to participate in the training in order to be brought up to date on the program’s enhancements.”

“Ms. Taylor was fully engaged and led by example during the Lexia training,” recounted Perry. “She let us know that we were all in this together.” Teachers began using Core5 as a regular station in their small-group rotations after the training. Students received the differentiated instruction they needed online, and teachers used offline instructional materials to work with students individually or in small groups to teach specific skills. “I believe

that accounts for the improved scores we’re now seeing,” said Perry.

Teachers at Clay Charter Academy value Core5’s data-driven Class Action Plan and review it daily to see which students need more time on Core5, who may need a teacher-led Lexia Lesson®, and who has completed a Core5 level and is ready for a Lexia Skill Builder®. Perry dedicates a station in her centers to Skill Builders, the pencil-and-paper activities designed to develop students’ automaticity in their newly acquired literacy skills. “With Core5, I can see my students growing and taking more ownership of their learning,” Perry stated. “They work hard in the program, are improving academically, and their self-confidence is building as well.”

“Core5 adapts to every child and provides much more individualized instruction than I possibly could,” stated kindergarten teacher Brittaney Hernandez. “The program accelerates learning for my students who struggle and even my high flyers can advance and continue to learn.”

Taylor, her teachers, and the students have all embraced Core5 and continue to advance toward their goal of reading proficiency for all—even through the pandemic. Taylor concluded, “I’m a believer in this program because, bottom line, Core5 is changing students’ lives.”

Success By the Numbers

The percentage of students who were working at or above grade level increased from **40% to 82%** in just six months.

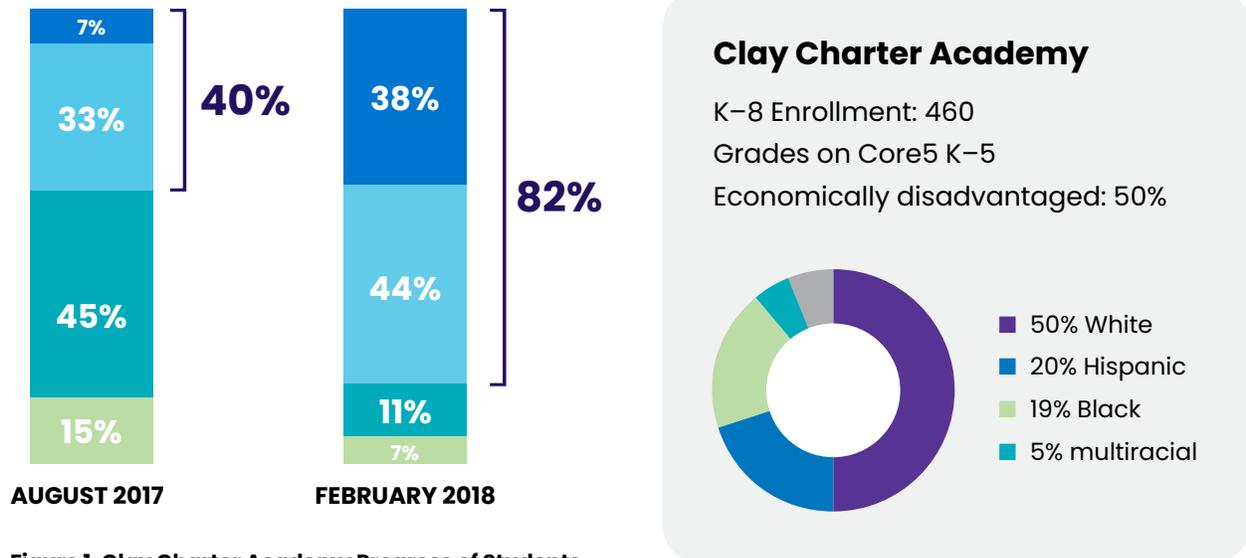


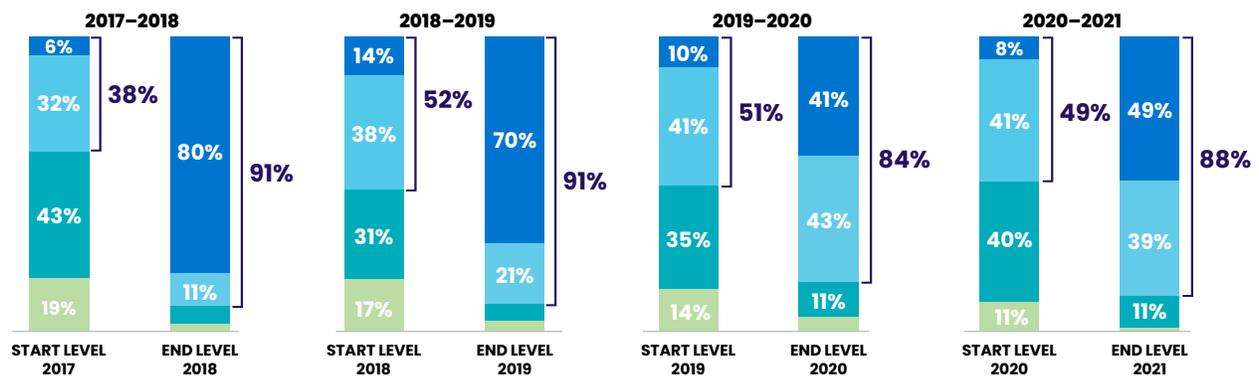
Figure 1. Clay Charter Academy Progress of Students Meeting Usage (N=263)

*Students meeting recommended usage in Core5 (N=263) at least 50% of the time with at least 12 weeks of usage in 2017-2018.

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

Long-Lasting Gains

By the end of the 2017-2018 school year, Clay Charter Academy saw 91% of students reading at or above grade level, and continued to see improved student outcomes year after year. Even during the pandemic, Core5 helped students improve their literacy skills, with only 12% of students reading below grade level at the end of the 2020-2021 school year.



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