

Transforming Reading Instruction

The Boerne ISD journey with
95 Phonics Core Program[®]

Boerne Independent School District (ISD) in San Antonio, Texas faced challenges in delivering a cohesive phonics curriculum across its diverse schools. With gaps in instruction and a variety of approaches among educators, Boerne ISD adopted the 95 Phonics Core Program to provide a structured, systematic solution.

District partner introduction

Boerne ISD has more than 11,000 students on 13 campuses in a fast-growing area within the suburbs of San Antonio, Texas. Eight of the campuses have elementary schools. Three of the eight elementary schools are Title 1, Part A funded. Three have a higher population of economically disadvantaged students, and four are dual language, two-way Spanish immersion schools. Approximately 16% of students in the district receive special education services.

Problem

Texas law requires school districts to have a phonics curriculum for kindergarten through third grade. Although the district had previously purchased a comprehensive core ELA program, its use was not required, leading to gaps and inconsistencies in phonics instruction. As Marshay Wolff, Curriculum Coordinator RLA Elementary at Boerne ISD, explained,

“Everybody was doing something different. They were making up their own stuff.”

Faced with these issues, but empowered with knowledge about the science of reading acquired from state-mandated teacher training, the team at Boerne ISD decided they needed a new path. A committee was formed to evaluate different products, and ultimately they selected 95 Phonics Core Program® for its structured, explicit, and systematic approach.

Solution

95 Phonics Core Program® was straightforward for Boerne ISD to adopt. After familiarizing themselves with the program, the teachers could see themselves using it, improving their teaching skills, and making a difference in their classrooms. The program's simplicity allowed for seamless implementation into daily instruction.

Boerne ISD began implementing 95 Phonics Core Program in 1st grade, as the 1st grade teachers were the first to receive the state-mandated reading training. With a solid implementation plan that included training and resources, Boerne ISD established an environment where teachers were encouraged to take risks and were supported with ongoing monitoring and coaching.

The next year, Boerne ISD began implementing the program in kindergarten and second grade. By then, teachers in these grades had completed their training and were ready to begin using 95 Phonics Core Program. The program's success in the first year made it easier to expand the implementation, as teachers themselves became advocates, sharing the positive change they had seen in their classrooms.



95 Phonics Core Program made teachers' jobs easier by providing curriculum-aligned texts, serving as a "one-stop shop" for instructional materials.

“ We didn't have to sell it as much the second year. The teachers sold it for us because they could see the impact.”

MARSHAY WOLFF

Curriculum Coordinator RLA Elementary at Boerne ISD

While state law mandates a phonics solution for third grade, it does not require it for fourth and fifth grades. The district met with several campuses to discuss the possibility of implementing the Phonics Core Program in all three grades. Teachers and principals expressed strong interest, with some stating,

“If you’re not going to buy it, I am.”

This enthusiasm indicated that they recognized the program’s positive effect for their younger elementary students and were ready to implement it for their older elementary students. In the 2023–2024 school year, 95 Phonics Core Program was rolled out to third, fourth, and fifth grades.

As an added element, Boerne ISD used the implementation and coaching services provided by 95 Percent Group. The real-time coaching had the most significant impact. The coaches helped Boerne ISD teachers pace lessons, interpret student responses, and make necessary adjustments.

This additional support from 95 Percent Group literacy experts enhanced the partnership and improved implementation. As Marshay reflected,

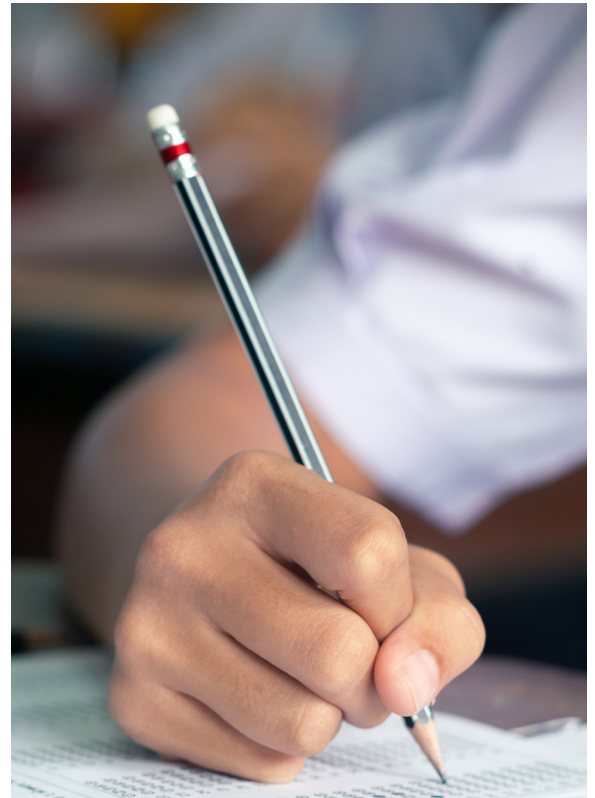
“[When your coach is] walking side by side with you, even when you’re supposed to be the ‘RL expert,’ when you don’t write the curriculum or coach it every single day, it just makes that partnership and the implementation so much better.”

Results

Everyone involved—including administrators, teachers, and coaches—have believed in the process, and the results have been remarkable. Boerne ISD has seen improvements in student scores on the mClass® DIBELS® Assessment and on state assessments.

Phone calls from parents and success stories from teachers about students learning to read have underscored the positive impact of the 95 Phonics Core Program.

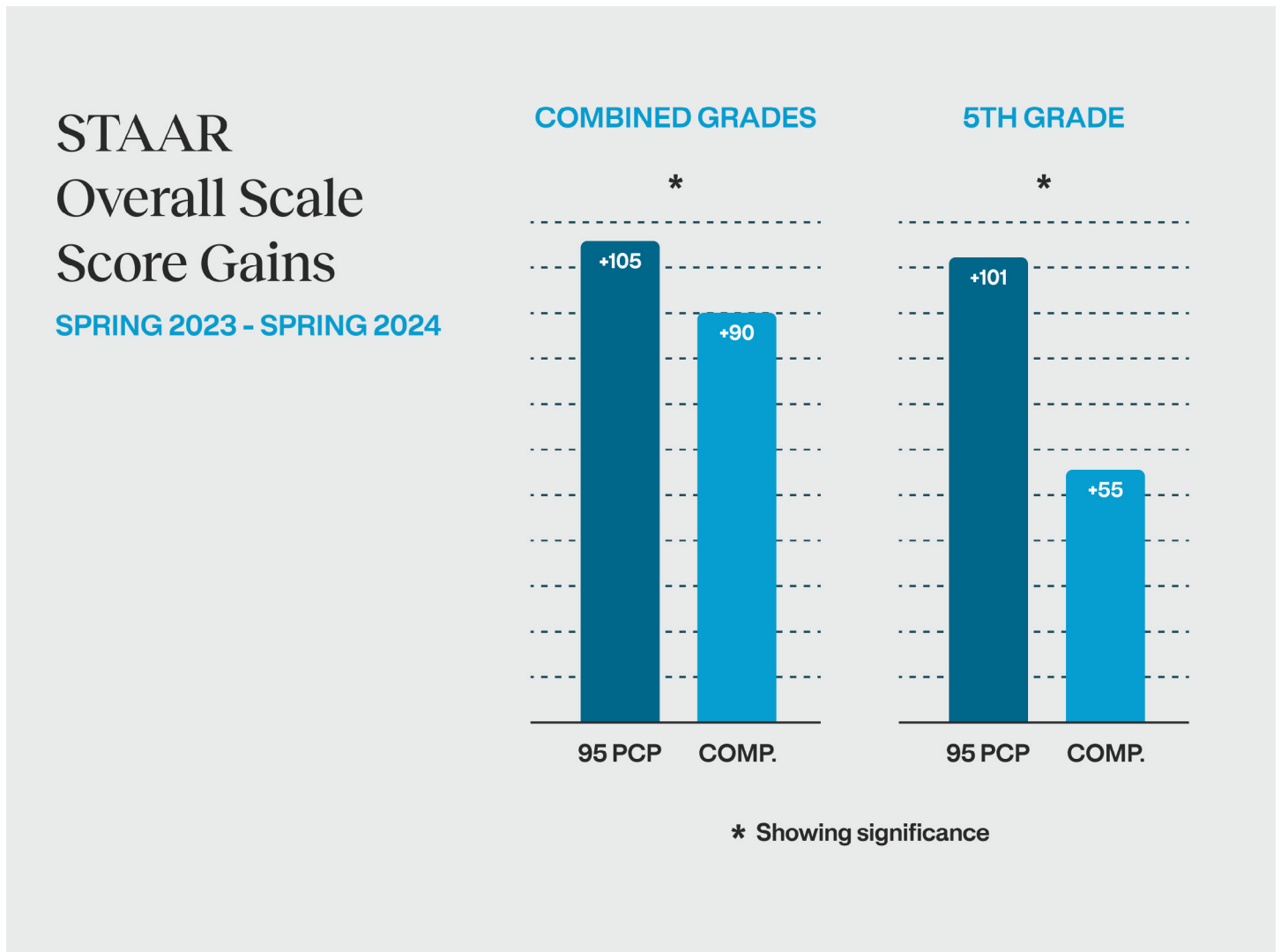
Some parents and teachers in the district have inquired about the reading instruction, hoping the district will implement a similarly impactful solution for their middle and high school students.



DATA FROM RECENT RESEARCH STUDY

95 Phonics Core program was used with students in grades 4 and 5 in Boerne ISD. The combined scores showed significantly more growth in overall scale scores (+104.9 points) in reading than their comparison group peers (+89.7 points) from spring 2023 to spring 2024.

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR): Overall scores



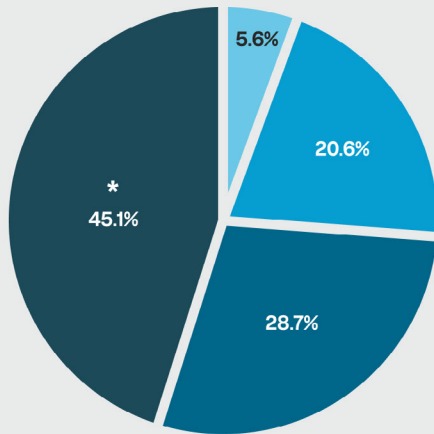
Additionally, 95 Phonics Core Program students in grades 4-5 combined were significantly more likely to be in the mastery-ready benchmark (45.1%) than their comparison group peers (37.7%).

STAAR Benchmark Level

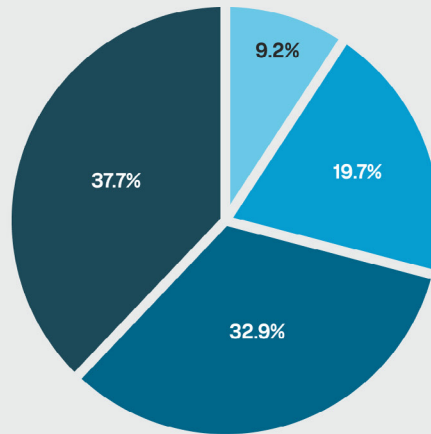
4th & 5th

GRADES COMBINED

MASTERY MEETS APPROACHING BELOW



95 PCP

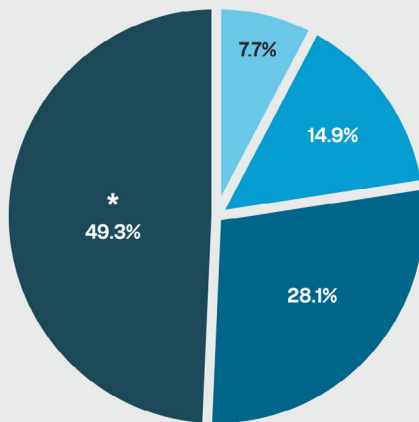


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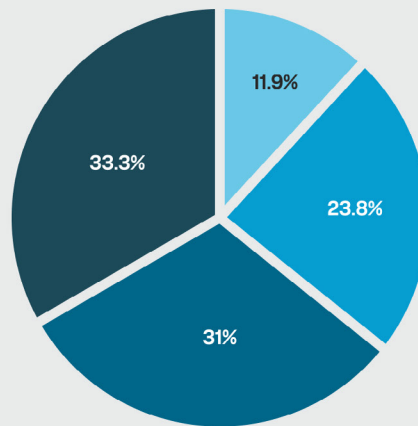
5th Grade

ONLY

MASTERY MEETS APPROACHING BELOW



95 PCP



COMP.

[Graph sources](#)

Conclusion

Success has come in many forms for Boerne ISD. Teachers have gained a deeper understanding of the principles of high-quality reading instruction through compulsory training, and they now know how to effectively teach students to read using the 95 Phonics Core Program. They see its effectiveness reflected in both reading performance data and the reactions of students, parents, and their colleagues.

Boerne ISD's proactive approach is making a measurable difference in student achievement and community engagement. While challenges remain, they are celebrating their success so far.

“ And so while there's still a lot of work to be done...you have to sometimes sit back and be like, okay, we're doing good work and it's making a difference.”

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