

CASE STUDY:

Brush Public School District Monitors Student Progress, Improves Achievement with Lexile Measures



Lexile: Matching readers to text

With the increased focus on standardized testing in U.S. education, a pitfall many school districts face is maintaining the fine balance between providing a comprehensive education and “teaching to the test.” Resourceful districts are seeking solutions that augment the standardized requirements while integrating seamlessly with existing curricula.

A small school district in rural northeast Colorado, Brush Public Schools began an initiative in 2000 to enhance its assessments of student achievement in reading. In collaboration with the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), Brush implemented a levels-testing program, which incorporates The Lexile Framework® for Reading. The integration of Lexile® measures into the district’s assessment process enables teachers to tailor assignments and reading materials to their students’ individual reading levels without sacrificing content. Simultaneously, the district can now closely monitor a student’s progress in reading.

Taking the Guesswork Out of Selecting Reading Materials

According to Larry Kleiber, Ph.D., director of instructional support and program evaluation for Brush Public Schools, Lexiles are a valuable instructional tool for teachers, since they take the guesswork out of selecting level-appropriate reading materials.

“Lexiles enable our teachers to work smarter, not harder. They already work hard.”

“Once a text is leveled with a Lexile value we can make a cross-reference to the Lexile score that our kids had on the reading assessment,” he says. “That score gives us a reading range, and the teacher aims for the students to emerge with at least 75-percent comprehension. Lexiles give our teachers the opportunity to put instructionally appropriate material in front of the kids.”

Brush uses NWEA’s Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) computerized assessment program, which uses the Rasch Unit (RIT) of measurement, a numeric scale that determines the difficulty level at which each student can perform, regardless of grade. In addition to an RIT score, each student also receives a Lexile measure, which helps the teachers and librarians identify reading materials that are appropriately challenging.

“The RIT scores, when linked to the NWEA Learning Continuum, provide teachers with a roadmap of skills the students are ready to learn, and how far they’re able to get in the school year,” Kleiber says. “The Lexile loops into that as a guideline for selecting appropriately difficult material. We even use it as a measure for selecting textbooks.”

Helping Teachers Work Smarter

The Colorado district even “Lexiled” its entire library collection, then added student Lexile scores to the library management software. “We loaded Lexiles into our library data management system, so when the student’s account comes up, the librarian can see if the student’s checking out books in the appropriate range,” he says. Although it took two years to “Lexile” the library, Kleiber believes that it was time well spent. “Lexiles enable our teachers to work smarter, not harder. They already work hard.”

The value of Lexiles as an instructional tool was demonstrated when a sixth-grade social studies class was assigned a research project using a specific almanac in the library. When the aggregate of assignments turned in either missed the mark or were clearly copied from the text, it raised a red flag with the teacher. Upon scanning the assigned almanac into the Lexile Analyzer®, the district discovered that it measured 200 points above the middle reading ability of the students in the class.

“Kids were being asked to read and independently comprehend something they couldn’t, so their only option to jump through the hoop was to copy and turn it in for the grade,” Kleiber notes. “Realizing that enabled the teacher to be much more selective in choosing texts for independent student reading. Using the Lexile as a point of reference, and making some minor tweaks to the

lesson plan, the teacher was able to accomplish the learning goals for the assignment. Real learning took place.”

Since adopting Lexiles at Brush Public Schools, Kleiber has seen scores rise across the board, and in reading, in particular. “I think it’s a growing standard for evaluating the difficulty of text,” he concludes. “I anticipate that in the not-too-distant future it will be one of the hallmark standards for our profession.”

The Brush Public School District serves a population of just over 5,000 residents in Brush, C.O., 90 miles from Denver.

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The Lexile Framework® for Reading provides a common scale for matching reader ability and text difficulty, enabling teachers and parents to choose materials that can help to improve student reading skills and monitor literacy across the curriculum and at home. Recognized as the most widely adopted reading measure in use today, Lexiles® are part of reading and testing programs at district, state and federal levels. More than 100,000 books and 80 million articles have Lexile measures, and all major standardized tests can report student reading scores in Lexiles.

Benefits of Using Lexiles

- Facilitates selection of appropriate reading materials for students and classes
- Enables teachers and librarians to track and assist students in their choices of challenging reading matter
- Allows teachers to tailor curriculum to meet students’ needs
- Increases performance in reading and other subjects

For more information on Lexiles, contact us at **1.888.LEXILES** or visit www.Lexile.com.

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