

# Making the shift to the Science of Reading

Science of Reading Star Award “Rookie of the Year” winner, Windber Elementary, PA, shows significant gains with Amplify CKLA, Boost Reading, and mCLASS.



Windber  
Elementary School

# Background

Windber Area School District in Pennsylvania serves just over 1,200 students. Among them, 93.2% are White, 2.1% Hispanic, 0.8% Black, 0.3% Asian, and 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native. The elementary school serves just over 600 PreK–5 students.



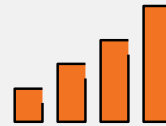
## Challenge

In 2022–23, low reading scores at Windber Elementary led leaders to adopt a curriculum aligned to the Science of Reading to build a stronger literacy foundation and support lasting student success.



## Solution

Windber Elementary's leaders sought an evidence-based curriculum that was aligned with their goals, supported by colleagues, and shared a commitment to effective teaching.



## Impact

Windber Elementary's use of mCLASS, CKLA, and Boost Reading raised the percentage of students meeting benchmarks from 48% to 63% in their first year of implementation.

# Challenge

Windber Elementary faced sobering statistics in the 2022–23 school year, with mCLASS® data showing that less than 45% of its kindergarten and first grade students were meeting reading expectations. This deficit highlighted a critical need for transformation, particularly in foundational reading skills. The educators and administrators urgently sought solutions to bolster students' literacy. It was clear to administrators and teachers that Windber needed to build a reading culture that would empower every learner.

Elementary school principal Charles Beckley articulated this concern: "We realized that to truly

impact our students' futures, we had to rethink our entire reading strategy. It wasn't just about immediate improvements; it was about setting up our students for sustained success in reading proficiency."

Beckley and his team realized that their existing systems were not aligned with the Science of Reading and its evidence-based methodologies. They began looking for a research-backed curriculum that could genuinely support and extend student learning.

# Solution

Windber Elementary's leadership team embarked on a journey to identify a curriculum that would align with their goals. Their search was guided by support from their colleagues and a commitment to evidence-based teaching.

## Evaluating their options

The evaluation began in April 2022, when a core team—including the principal, ELA chair, psychologist, MTSS coordinator, and lead teachers—consulted with the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Program (PaTTAN) to explore the Science of Reading.

The team meticulously evaluated multiple programs before homing in on Amplify's CKLA. Team members appreciated CKLA's ample teacher support structures and reputation for strong student outcomes. The team organized a peer-review process, engaging grade-level leaders to assess CKLA kits and give feedback, which became vital for further discussions among leadership.

A critical moment for the school came in May, when teachers were invited to witness CKLA in action at an Indiana school. It turned out to be transformative. Seeing the structure, rigor, and success of CKLA firsthand solidified teacher buy-in. Beckley reflected, "When we saw CKLA in action and the structured mastery it provided, we knew this was more than just a curriculum—it was a cultural shift."

After the school visit, the leadership team reconvened to decide on the best-fit Amplify program for Windber. CKLA, complemented by Boost Reading for individualized student practice, emerged as the program of choice, because it aligned seamlessly with mCLASS, the Science of Reading, and the school's instructional goals.

## Implementing CKLA and Boost Reading

With the board's blessing and community enthusiasm, Windber pushed forward with implementation. Teachers explored CKLA content and participated in Amplify's two-day Launch training, guaranteeing their readiness for the upcoming school year.

Beckley and his team took great care to restructure the daily schedules to ensure that students were gaining the most out of their literacy blocks. "Overall, building the schedule was the most important thing," he said.

Throughout the school year, Boost Reading was used during "Rambler Time" (Windber's term of choice for short periods of independent study), further individualizing student practice. The 35-minute Rambler Time sessions provided enrichment and remediation

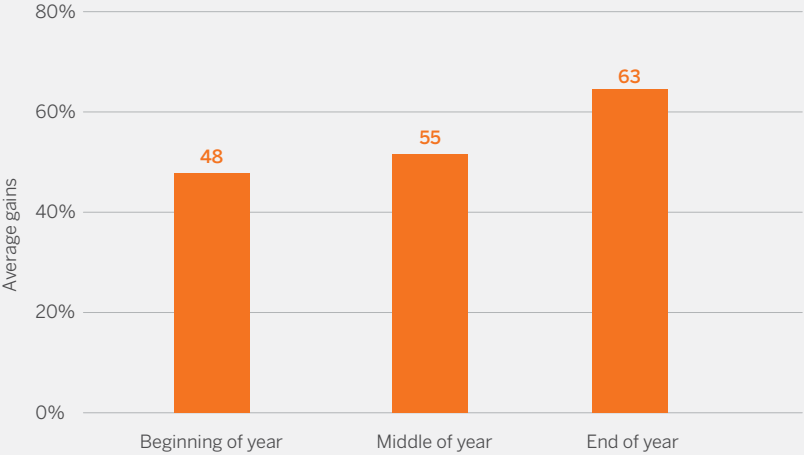
across grades 1–5, fostering a nurturing environment for personal growth.

Amplify's professional development and support had a significant impact in Windber's first year of implementation. Monthly collaborative data meetings between educators and Amplify provided valuable qualitative and quantitative insights that highlighted successes and challenges. And continuous communication between Windber and Amplify allowed for easy adjustments to teaching methods and strategies, ensuring that the educational needs of students were consistently met. As data accumulated, Windber's teachers were able to target student needs more precisely and improve outcomes more and more.

# Impact

Windber Elementary’s strategic adoption of mCLASS, CKLA, and Boost Reading had remarkable results. Students experienced a steady trajectory of success. At the beginning of the year, 48% of students were meeting grade-level benchmarks. But with the use of Amplify programs, 55% were at benchmark by midyear and 63% got there by the end of the year. This extraordinary upswing underscored the impact of an evidence-based curriculum, coupled with dedicated instructional practice.

**Windber Elementary School students scoring at or above benchmark throughout the 2023–24SY**

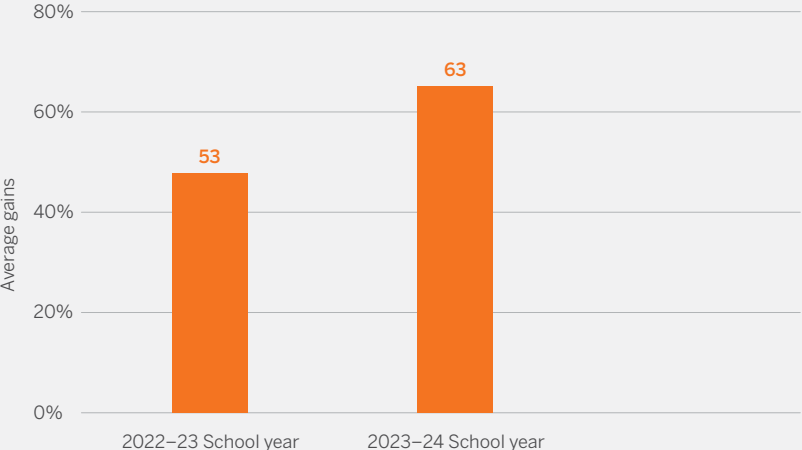


“In just one year, our students’ reading scores have risen dramatically and their confidence has soared”.

— Principal Beckley

This progress marked a substantial leap compared to prior years. The percentage of elementary students meeting or surpassing reading benchmarks jumped from 53% to 63%, demonstrating remarkable progress.

### Windber Elementary School students scoring at or above benchmark at the end of the year



As Principal Beckley said, “We dared to innovate, and the results speak for themselves.” The district’s gains, acknowledged in its Science of Reading Star Award “Rookie of the Year” designation, can serve as an example for school districts nationwide: A research-based literacy curriculum and thoughtful adoption strategies can have quick and impressive results.

For more information about  
Amplify's complete early literacy  
suite based on the Science of Reading,  
visit **[amplify.com](https://www.amplify.com)**.

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