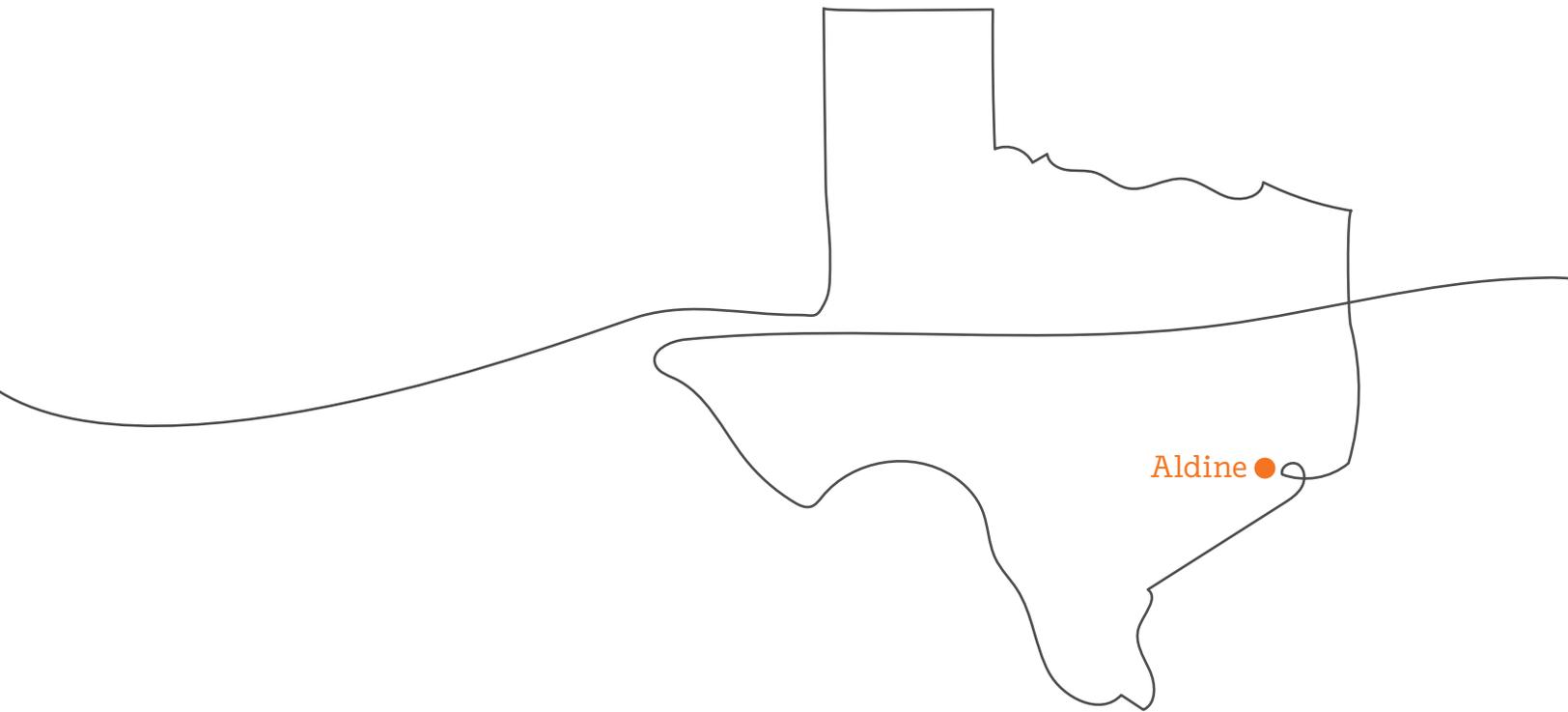


# Making the shift to the Science of Reading

Texas' Aldine Independent School District experienced incredible gains after implementing Amplify's early literacy suite.



# Aldine ISD's story at a glance

Aldine ISD is northeast of Houston and serves nearly 62,000 students on 83 campuses over 111 square miles. English language learners make up 42% of the student body, and over 90% of students are economically disadvantaged.



83  
Campuses

62,000  
Students

42%  
English language learners



## Challenge

Only 30% of Aldine ISD's third-grade students were reading on or above grade level.



## Solution

Aldine shifted to the Science of Reading and Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts® (CKLA), mCLASS®, and Boost Reading.



## Results

After just one year, the percentage of elementary students reading at or above grade level rose from 30% to 43%; after two years, it rose to 50%.

Two years after implementing the Science of Reading and Amplify’s early literacy suite, the number of students who hit the benchmarks of at or above grade level went from 30% to 43%; after two years, it rose to 50%.

Beginning of Year 2020–2021

End of Year 2020–2021

End of Year 2021–2022

30%



43%



50%

## Background

In 2018, Aldine ISD received poor results on an audit of their existing curriculum, was entering a new curriculum adoption, and introduced a new superintendent, Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney.

Dr. Goffney discovered soon after joining the district that the first time many students were exposed to grade-level text was on the STAAR test state assessment. She saw this as unacceptable.

Coming from a disadvantaged background herself, Dr. Goffney places a high importance on not only knowing how to read, but also on enjoying reading and experiencing the opportunities that come from being able to read.

She grew up with grandparents whose formal education ended in elementary school and who made sure she knew that if she could read, doors would open for her. “Education is the great equalizer and literacy opens up opportunities, so we’ve got to get literacy right,” she emphasized.

Her guiding belief that literacy is a gateway to opportunity spread throughout the district, which rallied for change that would bring positive outcomes for its students.

# Channeling change

In 2018, Aldine ISD was a balanced literacy district. The curriculum did not align to state standards, and teachers were not invested in it, yielding low expectations and poor outcomes.

Dr. Goffney requested a second audit that revealed the same findings and confirmed that low student performance results were directly correlated to district-wide practices and resources.

Recognizing the need for change, Dr. Goffney called for a Literacy Task Force, spearheaded by Dr. Todd Davis, Chief Academic Officer.

The task force included 50 district leaders who partnered with The New Teacher Project (TNTP) to embark on a collective learning journey in service of building a framework for literacy.

Education is the great equalizer and literacy opens up opportunities for more impact, so we've got to get literacy right.



**Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney**

Superintendent, Aldine ISD

# Defining the vision

In partnership with TNTP, the Literacy Task Force shifted their belief system from balanced literacy to the Science of Reading, crafting a vision statement to which every Aldine educator is now committed:

Aldine ISD will provide academically rigorous and culturally relevant literacy instruction that prepares all students to be analytical readers, skillful writers, and effective communicators for success in college, career, and life.

“Not only was there a vision statement,” Dr. Goffney stated, “but there were also commitments about what we were going to be able to provide for our students, as well as the expectations we had of our teachers, instructional coaches, campus administrators, and district administrators.”

# A thorough curriculum review

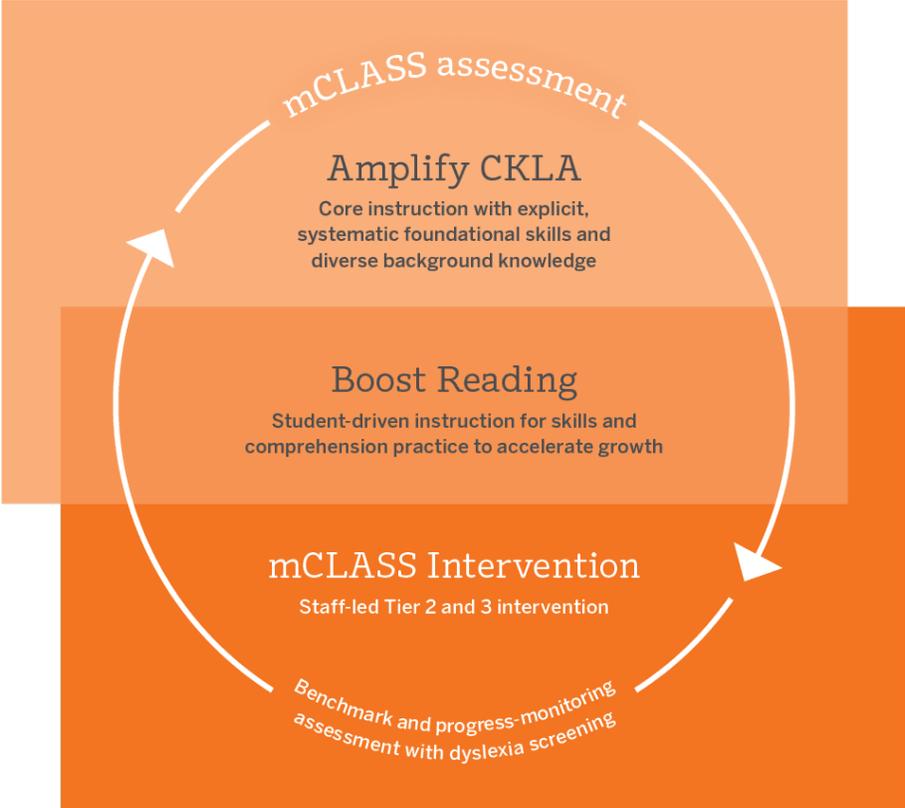
“We studied the data of different school districts that have similar student demographics,” Dr. Goffney said. “When we saw those that were moving the needle, we asked them what curriculum they were using and what were they doing. We didn’t allow vendors to come straight to us. We went to where student outcomes were improving, and over and over again, we were hearing about the same curriculum. That was probably the most powerful thing.”

The curriculum was Amplify’s complete literacy suite: Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (core curriculum), mCLASS (assessment and

intervention), and Boost Reading (personalized learning), all built on the Science of Reading.

At a particularly impactful site visit in Tennessee, Aldine’s leaders witnessed students demographically similar to theirs using Amplify’s early literacy suite in the classroom. These students were much further along in their literacy development than Aldine ISD’s students were.

Aldine’s leaders came back from this visit with the confidence they needed to make the shift to the Science of Reading and Amplify curriculum to improve literacy outcomes for their students.



Amplify’s early literacy suite

# A decision in uncertain times

Upon discovering the curriculum that actualized their vision, Aldine ISD chose Amplify for its direct alignment to their framework—a framework anchored in the Science of Reading research.

Even amid pandemic challenges, the Literacy Task Force was adamant about recommending full-scale implementation, because they viewed Amplify curriculum as the perfect fit for Aldine ISD, and because “students and teachers deserve nothing less than a high-quality and fully-aligned curriculum in service of the district’s ideal framework,” said Dr. Davis.

Aldine ISD and Amplify joined forces to develop a powerful training and professional development program that launched virtually in June 2020.

The initial training program was structured to start with Amplify CKLA, then adding mCLASS assessment, followed by mCLASS Intervention, and concluding with Boost Reading. This training empowered teachers to implement Amplify programs with fidelity, facilitating lesson planning and teaching despite their new, fully virtual learning environment and continued obstacles due to the ongoing pandemic.



# Immediate impact

Aldine ISD implemented Amplify's early literacy suite district-wide in August 2020. During the first year of implementation, the district experienced student literacy gains while many other districts were seeing losses.

Georgina Foroi, Principal at Gloria B. Sammons Elementary School, said, "I can't tell you how amazing [the] results I have seen [are], not just with our students, but also with our teachers. Aldine is on the right track, and this year, we're taking it to the next level."

"The kids are really into it," she continued. "They love the literature; they love the visuals that come along with the curriculum. Our environment is so rich with anchor charts, visuals, and vocabulary that we adults probably didn't learn until we were in high school. When you see that print-rich environment, and hear the kids talking about these things, and hear the vocabulary they're using, what else do you want?"

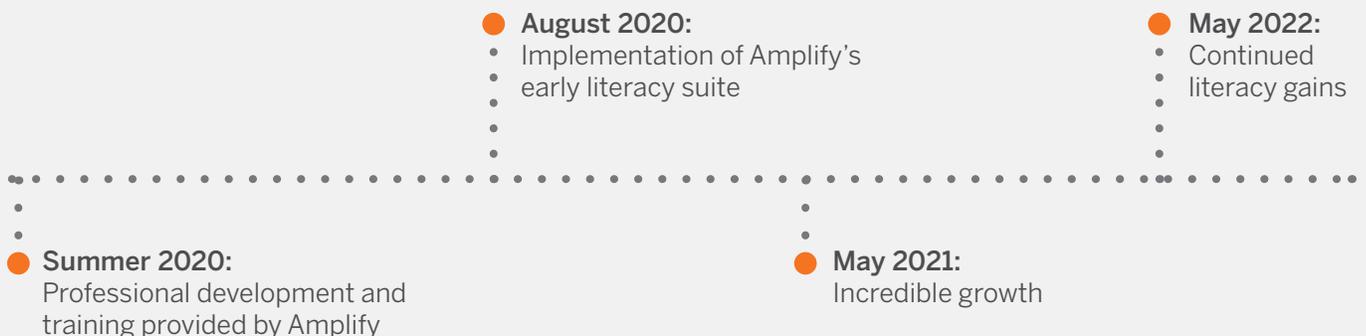
Seeing this progress was definitely the result of a group effort. "The team from Amplify was so important to us in our work," said Dr. Todd Davis, Chief Academic Officer. "We see our teachers this year [as] even more secure and confident in the curriculum materials, and using them in new and innovative ways."

Amplify's writing instruction especially impressed Dr. Davis, who said that "there were lots and lots of opportunities for writing—writing about what they were learning—and the vocabulary was very rich. That was another area that we were really seeking to build in our students, and the Amplify units perfectly aligned to [our] vision."

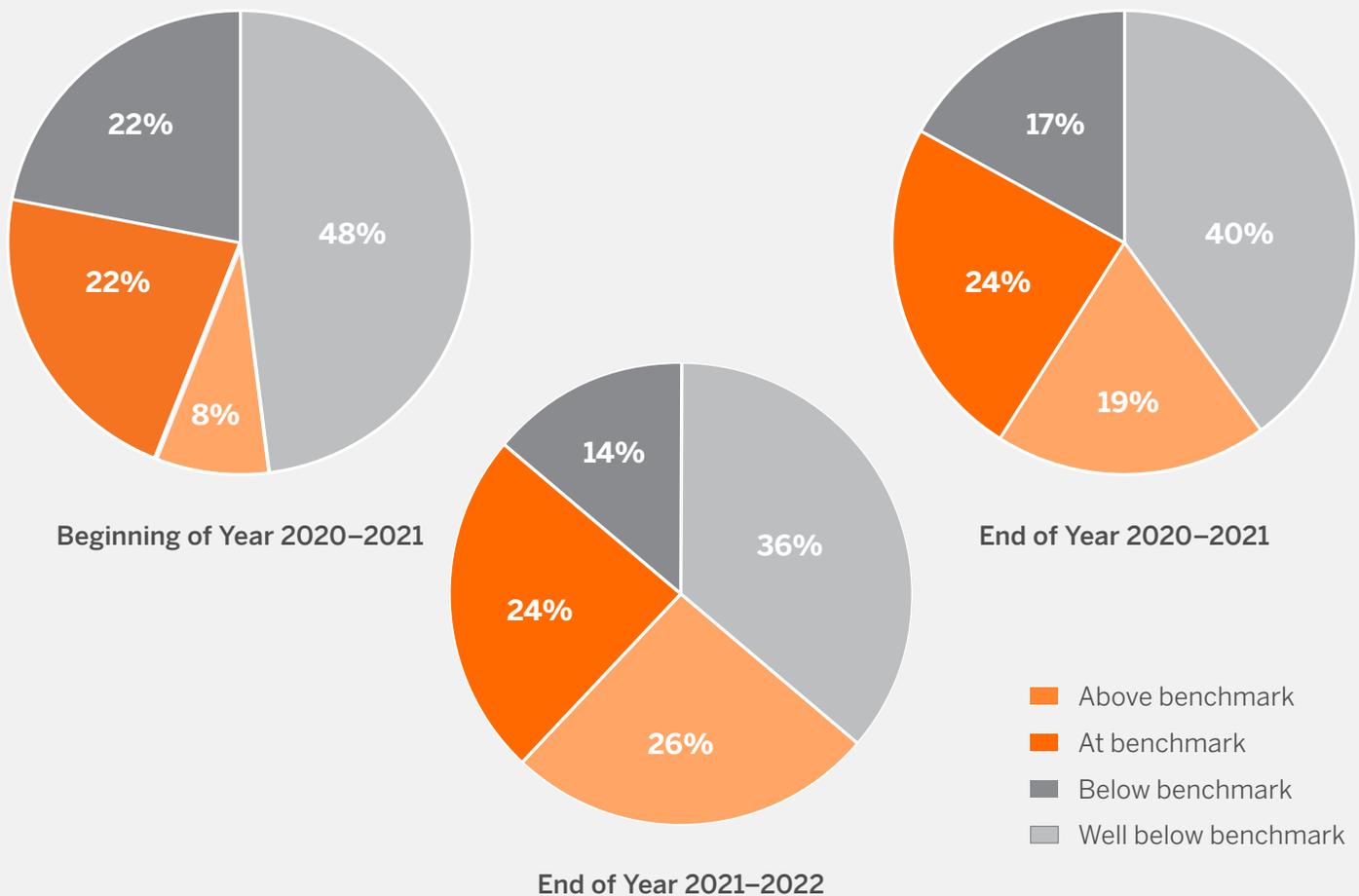
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**Georgina Foroi**  
Principal, Sammons  
Gloria B. Sammons  
Elementary School,  
Aldine ISD



## Aldine ISD's elementary student growth, 2020–2022



mCLASS with DIBELS® 8th Edition data, 2020–2022

Furthermore, Aldine’s educators have learned how to interpret the data provided by Amplify’s programs, and how to compare student performance within their own schools and district, as well as across the state and nationwide.

“This year, it’s a lot easier because we’re able to implement many of the protocols that we ineffectively attempted last year,” Ms. Foroi said. “Last year, we had to get the buy-in and work on our environment, vocabulary, and basic fundamental teaching strategies. This year, all of that has been made easier so we can keep expanding and diving deeper.”

After just two years, the data confirmed how the teachers and students felt in the classroom: The percentage of elementary students hitting the benchmark of at or above grade level rose from 30% to 43%; after two years, it rose to 50%.

And it wasn’t just that students were making gains—they were also more excited to read and learn.

“[We were] seeing our teachers excited because kids were excited about learning,” said Jamie Barrs, K–2 Literacy Program Director. “This really meets all of our needs and provides a rich experience for our kids, in terms of all the areas of knowledge building and foundational skills.”

# Helping others make the shift

Committed to ongoing development, Aldine educators worked with Amplify to pursue additional training. Eager to share their success and help others make the shift to the Science of Reading, they opened their training to educators worldwide. Thus began their free annual conference, Literacy Matters.

What would Aldine educators tell people who are just starting their Science of Reading journey?

Dr. Goffney highlighted the importance of school and district leaders recognizing that they don't have to know everything, but they need the proper resources and people in place to get the information they need.

According to the Aldine literacy team, there is no silver bullet: Implementing a framework and curriculum is a process, and it takes time to build results.

The team is committed to effective implementation and ongoing professional development to actualize their district framework and their students' full potential.

"We're not playing a short game. There is an end goal of graduation with choices and opportunities—students with the ability to enter advanced course work at the high school level, and thrive in those courses," said Dr. Davis. "That's the long game, and we're confident that Amplify curriculum is setting the foundation for our students' success."

We're not playing a short game. There is an end goal of graduation with choices and opportunities. That's the long game, and we're confident that Amplify curriculum is setting the foundation for our students' success.

**Dr. Todd Davis**

Chief Academic Officer, Aldine ISD

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

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