

# Driving impact through implementation science

How the Casa Grande Elementary School District tripled the percentage of kindergarteners reading on grade level in the first year of their Amplify CKLA implementation



Casa Grande Elementary  
School District

# Background

Located in Casa Grande, Arizona, Casa Grande Elementary School District (CGESD) serves approximately 6,400 students across 8 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, a C-STEM (computer science, technology, engineering, and math) school, and an early childhood learning center. The student population is 50% Hispanic, 20% White, 10% Native American, and 9% Black, with 9% of students identifying as two or more races. 76% are eligible for the federal free or reduced-price meal program.

**13**  
schools

**6,400**  
students

**76%**  
eligible for the free  
or reduced-price  
meal program

## Challenge

In 2023, Casa Grande Elementary School District confronted a difficult reality. The district had just completed a seven-year implementation of its previous English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum, and the district's data painted a concerning picture of inconsistent instruction and declining student outcomes.

"Because that previous ELA adoption was old, as far as adoptions go, we were all over the place in our instructional format and use of content in our classrooms," said Jan Draper, who was beginning her sixth year in the district and fourth year as district leader. "Our data definitely told that story."

Initially, district leaders wondered if the assessment results were showing post-COVID learning loss. But as the same patterns emerged year after year, it became clear that the challenges ran deeper.

The root of the problem lay in the district's heavy reliance on supplemental materials—up to 85%, says Draper. "That was hurting us." Teachers had become comfortable with this patchwork approach, but the lack of coherence was taking its toll on student achievement.

"Even the best pedagogy can't overcome the negative effects of incoherent curriculum, just as the best exercise regimen can't overcome the damage done by eating fast food," Draper said. The district realized they needed to move away from what she called "random acts of instruction" and toward a more aligned system.

In light of the challenges the district faced with patchwork curriculum, Casa Grande Elementary decided to invest in a comprehensive K–5 ELA overhaul that would position them for long-term success.

# Solution

Casa Grande Elementary's journey to the Science of Reading began in April 2023, with an exhaustive adoption process that included 43 classroom teachers piloting materials from seven different publishers for one full year.

The pilot process revealed something remarkable about Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA), one of the seven programs piloted. "We had several teachers who didn't want to switch once they started their pilot with CKLA," Draper recalled. "They didn't want to switch to the second program. They just wanted to pilot CKLA the whole time. So we knew we were on to something pretty great."

The timing of the adoption process aligned perfectly with Arizona's new legislative requirements. By 2028, all K–5 ELA teachers in the state must earn a reading endorsement on their teaching certification. Casa Grande Elementary had already begun preparing for this mandate, training more than 400 teachers in Science of Reading principles through their district-wide LETRS training program.

"Think about those two things happening side by side, right? What did they see with CKLA? They saw Science of Reading," Draper explained. This alignment significantly influenced both the adoption process and the final recommendation to the school board.

The implementation wasn't without its challenges. Some teachers had grown comfortable with supplemental programs and initially resisted the shift to a more structured curriculum. "We still had a lot of teachers who felt like they didn't need to align their arrows," Draper said. "[We had] to work our way through that issue—and maybe we still are—but it's going pretty well."

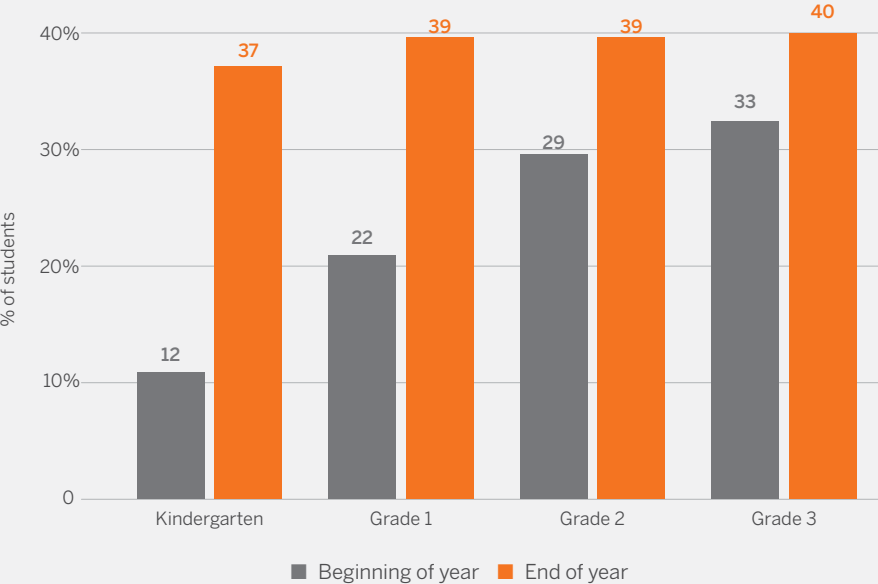
The district developed a comprehensive three-year professional development plan to support implementation. Year one focused on initial Amplify CKLA training for educators in May, July, and August 2024, followed by strengthening sessions in early 2025. The leadership team joined the Amplify Literacy Transformation program to support building their knowledge, as well as the knowledge and skills of their coaches and building leaders. Years two and three will emphasize continued support for new teachers and ongoing professional development to maintain fidelity to the core program.

Building-level instructional coaches became crucial to the implementation success, serving as Amplify CKLA experts who support teachers in deeper use of the materials. The district also established regular monitoring via walk-throughs at both building and district levels to ensure aligned practices.

# Impact

Early results from Casa Grande’s Amplify CKLA implementation show promising trends in foundational reading skills. mCLASS® DIBELS® 8th Edition results revealed gains across kindergarten through third grade, with kindergarten demonstrating the strongest growth: on-grade-level reading tripled from 12% at the start of the year to 37% by year’s end.

Casa Grande Elementary School District students scoring at or above benchmark on mCLASS in the 2024–25 school year



“This improvement is because of Amplify CKLA Skills, which were definitely missing from our old curriculum,” Draper said.

Teachers also quickly noticed the engagement and connection students showed with the Amplify CKLA materials. Teachers particularly appreciated the quality of nonfiction texts and how seamlessly social studies, science, and ELA standards integrated within the lessons.

While acknowledging that overall student outcomes haven’t yet reached district expectations, Draper remains optimistic about the trajectory. “Our student outcomes are not where we want them to be,” she said. “But we’re going to hit K–2 reading hard next year.”

## Survey highlights

At the end of the 2024–25 school year, teachers reflected on their experience with Amplify CKLA.

- 92% of teachers reported that “I have become increasingly more confident in my ability to teach CKLA.”
- 84% of teachers agreed with the statement “I feel CKLA supports me in teaching skills that support my students in becoming proficient readers.”

# Conclusion

Looking ahead, Casa Grande Elementary is doubling down on their commitment to Amplify CKLA while addressing implementation challenges head-on. The district plans to identify model classrooms at both K–2 and 3–5 levels, creating opportunities for teachers to observe effective Amplify CKLA instruction through learning walks.

“We are actually creating in CGESD what we’re calling ‘model classrooms,’ that we’ll send other teachers to see,” said Draper. This peer-to-peer learning approach supports the district’s goal of continuous improvement.

As Casa Grande Elementary continues its Amplify CKLA journey, Draper has identified two key areas where she is seeking continued support from other districts: maintaining fidelity while addressing teachers’ inclination to supplement with additional materials, and supporting under-certified teachers who are simultaneously learning both pedagogy and rigorous instructional materials.

The district’s experience demonstrates that successful curriculum implementation requires more than just adopting new materials. It requires sustained commitment, comprehensive professional development, and the willingness to work through challenges while keeping student outcomes at the center of all decisions.

“What we needed was to align our system,” Draper reflected. “CKLA is one of the ways that we are moving from random acts of instruction to aligned impact.” With strong alignment, Casa Grande Elementary is positioned to see the full potential of their Amplify CKLA implementation unfold in the years ahead.



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

This story reflects the experience of Casa Grande Elementary School District as told from the perspective of the district leader, Jan Draper, and includes mCLASS® data from 2024–25, as of November 7, 2025.

Amplify.

© 2025 Amplify Education, Inc.  
All trademarks and copyrights are the property of Amplify or its licensors.