

Building coherent K–8 literacy instruction

From 55% to 70.7%: How Three Rivers Local School District boosted sixth-grade ELA proficiency in four years



Three Rivers Local
School District

Background

Located in Cleves, Ohio, Three Rivers Local School District serves about 1,878 students in preK through 12th grade. The student body is 89.4% White, 3.2% Hispanic/Latino, 1.3% Black, and 0.5% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, with 5.5% of students identifying as two or more races. In addition, 26% are eligible for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program.

3
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Challenge

In recent years, teachers in Three Rivers Local School District began to see that the literacy curriculum was not comprehensive enough for middle school students. Sixth-grade intervention specialist Kristen Kestner described the curriculum as “pretty much all excerpts, which in middle school can be tricky, because kids lack a lot of the background knowledge that they need to understand the passages.”

To address this gap, the district developed a novel-based program designed to engage reluctant readers. Kestner says that many students come in thinking they just “don’t like to read”—but the novel studies helped shift that mindset. Still, the district realized it needed something more comprehensive: a curriculum that could serve both struggling and advanced learners while leaving room for successful novel studies. Leaders also wanted full instructional alignment across grades K–8, building on their existing use of Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) in most elementary grades.

Solution

Three Rivers began implementing Amplify ELA with the 100-Lesson Pathway beginning in the 2021–22 school year. This new structure “allowed us to make sure we were using Amplify as the core of our curriculum while still having space to pull in our novels,” said Kestner. That balance proved essential during the transition year, as teachers adjusted to new pacing, new content, and standards coverage for state tests.



What is the Amplify ELA 100-Lesson Pathway?

The Amplify ELA 100-Lesson Pathway is a curated set of 100 ELA lessons per grade level that ensures standards coverage while giving teachers flexibility to add their favorite content, provide interventions, or deliver targeted support based on their students' specific needs. This approach ensures curriculum coverage without sacrificing instructional customization. The 100-Lesson Pathway is available for all districts and is a core feature of Amplify ELA for grades 6–8.

Teachers found that multiple aspects of Amplify ELA enhanced their instruction. The content engaged students with relevant, relatable topics. Teachers used Amplify's units as springboards for deeper activities—leading Socratic seminars and bringing props like chocolate during the Chocolate unit to make learning memorable and interactive.

The curriculum's built-in flexibility also allowed teachers to integrate novels strategically. Teachers paired books like *Wonder* and *Bridge to Terabithia* with Amplify ELA units, and connected the Greek Mythology unit with contemporary novels like *The Lightning Thief*.

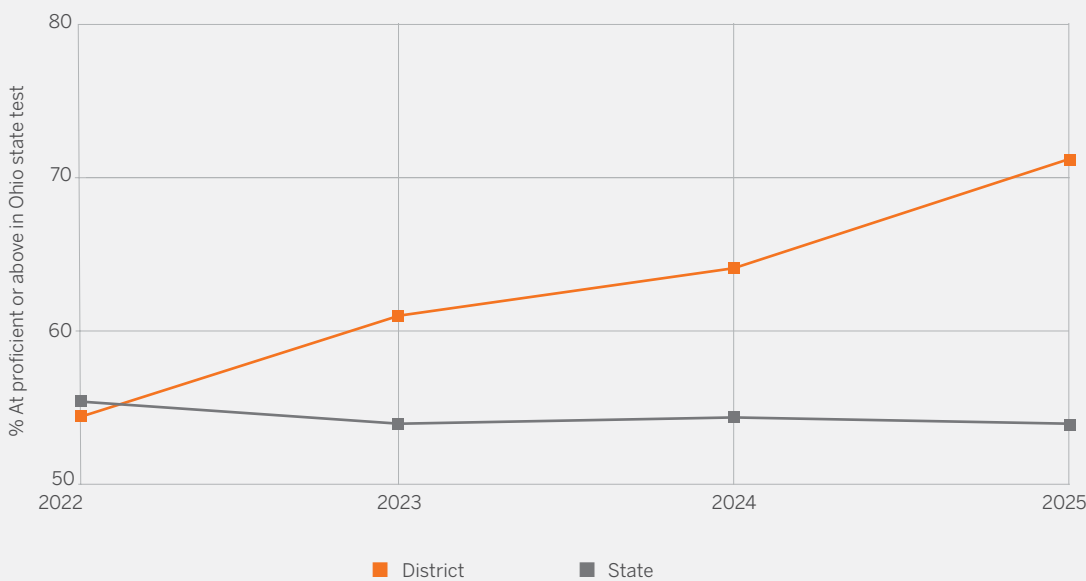
The structured approach strengthened teacher practice as well, as teachers became more familiar with the curriculum. “We’re stronger teachers in Amplify now,” says sixth-grade ELA teacher Rachael Petranek. “We know what the curriculum is, so we’re more confident.” That confidence led to greater student success, with teachers better equipped to support both struggling readers and those ready for advanced challenges.

To further supplement core instruction and meet Ohio's reading intervention requirements, the district invested in mCLASS® for progress monitoring and created dedicated intervention blocks. Instead of pulling students out for intervention, the teaching team built it directly into the schedule, significantly enhancing teachers' ability to support Tier 2 and 3 students.

Impact

Since implementing Amplify ELA in the 2021–22 school year, the district's sixth-grade ELA proficiency has improved from 55.2% to 70.7% in the 2024–25 school year—a 15.5 percentage point increase over four years. Starting in their second year of implementation, the district has consistently outperformed Ohio's state average; in 2024–25, their scores exceeded the statewide average of 55% by more than 15 points.

Grade 6 OST ELA scores since 2021: Three Rivers Local School District vs statewide



K–8 curriculum alignment has also created measurable improvements in student preparation. “The challenging work we need them to be able to do in sixth grade for state tests is now starting much earlier in elementary with CKLA,” Kestner says. “We’ve started to see that trickle-up effect where students are more exposed to challenging questions and complex reading passages from the beginning. Our hope is that it becomes second nature to them because they’ve been using this approach all the way up through the grades.”

Elementary results confirm this foundation-building effect. “We have found this year with our first and second graders that we have the lowest numbers we’ve ever had of below and well-below benchmark on mCLASS,” says Title 1 supervisor Kirstie Saunders. “The kids are much more ready for their grade-level content, which makes a big difference.”

Conclusion

Three Rivers Local School District has expanded its use of Amplify products, adding Amplify CKLA in fifth grade this year to strengthen the transition into middle school. The district continues to prioritize its Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) system and is adding mCLASS for seventh grade to ensure consistent progress monitoring across all middle school grades.

Their experience shows that a comprehensive curriculum can coexist with proven local practices. By pairing Amplify ELA's structured approach with their successful novel studies, the district sustained teacher buy-in while raising student achievement across proficiency levels.



For more information on Amplify
ELA, visit:

 amplify.com/ela

This story reflects the experience of Three Rivers Local School District as told from the perspective of the district leaders interviewed and includes sixth-grade Ohio state assessment data from 2022–25, as of November 5, 2025.

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