

DISTRICT INFORMATION

Name:

Mathews Elementary School

Location:

Greenwood, South Carolina

Grade:

for the past three years, and the reading confidence our students have now is amazing,” Leonard said. “And we saw that improvement within the very first semester.”

C a e e

Mathews has historically been the poorest performing elementary school in the district, with the highest poverty level. Before implementing *Open Court Reading*, the school was using the Lucy Calkins reading curriculum—a guided literacy approach that focuses less on phonics and more on story themes, characters and plots.

Mathews had incorporated the recently added phonics component of Lucy Calkins into its curriculum, after realizing that key element was missing. But there were still areas that were lacking. “We were missing the crucial foundational piece that fosters phonemic awareness, and our students weren’t being taught how to decode words or sound them out,” Leonard said. They realized they needed a proven

research-backed program that helped build those essential skills—one that would establish a strong foundation for lifelong literacy.

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Mathews implemented McGraw Hill's K–5 *SRA Open Court Reading* program during the 2020–2021 academic year. “Our main goal was to shore up our Tier 1 instruction, and we believed *Open Court Reading* was the answer,” Bosler said. For grades 1 and 2, Mathews started with the phonics element of the program. Bosler emphasized that

“it was important that our change in curriculum wasn't overwhelming for the students, so

Mathews Elementary MAP ELA Achievement Percentages
 SRA Open Court Reading

Grade Level	2019 Achievement Percentages	MAP ELA	2023 Achievement Percentages	MAP ELA
K5	38		97	
1st	24		95	
2nd	29		70	
3rd	7		53	
4th	28		70	
5th	25		60	



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Leonard said the students’ enthusiasm for reading has been the most inspiring aspect of all. “So many of our students are reading at or above grade level, and I’ve seen them in the halls talking about reading to each other,” she said. “We’ve also had parents tell us how much they appreciate their kiddos being excited about bringing books home to read.”

Bosler noted that another rewarding discovery about *Open Court Reading* has been that it not only enriches literacy development—but classroom management as well. “Our new teachers have especially benefited from the instructional continuity and systematic format of the program,” she said. Reducing class size has also accelerated success at Mathews. After rearranging Title I funds and placing

interventionists in the classroom with teachers, they now average 15 to 18 students for each class, compared to the previous average of 28 students per classroom.

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Well-versed in the Science of Reading, Bosler was initially hired to help implement *Open Court Reading* at Mathews. Because of the school’s dramatic literacy gains, she is now helping to implement the program districtwide, by modeling lessons in the classroom and coaching teachers at other schools. “We saw such incredible growth at Mathews, especially with K–2, that now all of our elementary schools in District 50 use it,” Bosler said.

