

# THE LEXILE COMMUNITY: *From Science to Practice*

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## Lexiles in Education

Educators in Miami-Dade County, the nation's fourth largest school district were searching for tools to help them implement a strategy to improve literacy among their students. They needed a bridge between school and home in order to encourage parental involvement. Further, they wanted a private-public partnership which enlisted the help of the business community. The Lexile Framework® provided exactly what they needed and the Miami-Dade County school district is on its way to building the first Lexile-linked community.

The Lexile Framework® connects reading comprehension tests, books, magazines and newspapers to a common scale of measurement. With this tool, tests and reading materials are linked, and, as a result, the days of confusing norm-referenced test results that limit practical applications for students, parents and teachers are over. Teachers, parents, libraries and bookstores can use the Lexile scale to provide books that encourage and challenge readers at all levels in the best possible way.

The common framework joins schools, homes, libraries, publishers and bookstores in one shared Lexile Community. "This kind of public-private partnership can only be a boost to our efforts to improve literacy," said Ms. Norma B. Bossard, District Director of the Miami-Dade County School's Division of Language Arts and Reading.

A similar effort has been launched in Atlanta. "We want our children to love reading books, and we believe this comprehensive plan will help us achieve that goal," said Dr. Regina Johnson, the Language Arts Coordinator for the Atlanta schools. "We were impressed by the concept of Lexiles because of its method of linking testing and books. We need to diagnose our student's ability to read and then to assign relevant reading materials. Now we can use the books in our schools and libraries to meet their needs."

Standardized tests have not given teachers or parents the tools they need to change children's behavior. The results of standardized tests, be they percentiles or scores, are not useful. How can a child's percentile score help a teacher, parent or student to develop a plan for improvement when the percentile has no real-life application? With the Lexile Framework®, the student knows from their Lexile measure what materials they can read and where that measure puts them on

the scale of educational development. Thus the Lexile Framework® gives schools a new and potent tool for encouraging and expediting parental involvement.

Three hundred thousand students were given spring Lexile-measured reading comprehension tests in Miami. The following summer, each student was encouraged to read 2 books from a recommended reading list geared to their respective reading levels. Students were tested again in the fall, and again in the spring to implement an aggressive student sensitive reading initiative.

## Business and the Lexile Program

The schools aren't alone in this endeavor. Barnes & Noble and Books & Books provide the Lexiled books that are used in the Miami-Dade reading initiative. The world's largest book distributors, Baker & Taylor and Ingram Book Company, also participate, making sure that Lexiled books are in their inventory for rapid delivery. Miami has become a Lexile-linked community, where families, schools, book stores, libraries and business work together to make sure children have access to books that help them improve their reading.

Lexile communities are developing in North Carolina, California, St. Petersburg, Atlanta and many school districts in Kansas. Books and tests which utilize the Lexile Framework®, Scholastic Reading Counts! and Harcourt's reading comprehension tests (Stanford 9 and Metropolitan 8), are used in 18 of our largest school districts.

Lexiles are bringing together instruction and assessment - two worlds that in the past have been separate. This is crucial to building a community which implements programs that help children improve their reading. The assessment tools are Lexile-linked reading comprehension tests. The instructional tools are Lexile-based reading lists. Now that the book industry is involved, parents and students can get measured reading lists and targeted books that maximize their children's opportunity to improve their reading.

## The Framework Spreads

Miami-Dade and Atlanta are only 2 examples of the growing acceptance of the Lexile Framework® across the educational marketplace. Today the number of students who



receive Lexile reading measures and Lexiled reading lists exceeds 10 million. The use of the Lexile Framework® is spreading. Lexiles are on the way to becoming the standard by which the measurement of reading comprehension and the determination text and book readability are measured.

The United States Department of Education endorses the framework for its "America Reads" program. California measures its reading list in Lexiles. Harcourt-Brace Educational Measurement reports the results of its standardized tests in Lexile measures. Scholastic, Inc. has lexiled 4,000 titles. Texas, Kentucky, New York and Boston are adopting Lexile-measured products.

### Lexiles In Miami

The Lexile Framework® is essential to the Miami-Dade County comprehensive reading plan. The plan requires that students, after taking Scholastic Reading Inventory tests which report Lexile measures, read five books during each nine-week grading period, plus additional books during the summer. Books must be Lexiled to be on the district's reading list. Each Miami-Dade County Public School student in grades 2-11 is given a Lexile reading test to determine their reading level and to plan their instruction.

### Lexiles in Atlanta

Atlanta uses a Lexile program for 30,000 students in grades 1 through 5. Students receive Scholastic Reading Inventory Lexile measures that help them shape their own reading programs. Atlanta gets the right book to the right student at the right time.

Barnes & Noble, Baker & Taylor and Ingram Book Company are ensuring that the Lexiled books on recommended reading lists are readily available in Atlanta stores and libraries. Education is the number one concern of the American people. A major reason for this concern is poor literacy skills. This public-private partnership is replicating around the country. When schools, libraries and industry can go into battle together against a common foe, they will succeed.

### Lexiles in California

California has Lexiled 500 books for its State of California reading list. Harcourt Brace has linked its Stanford 9 and Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test to the Lexile Framework®. This means that California's 5.9 million students receive Lexile measures that show them their positions in the Lexile Framework® and hence the books that are best for developing their reading. California school districts provide a targeted reading list to each of their students, based on each student's test results.

### Lexiles in North Carolina

North Carolina students take Lexile-linked reading comprehension tests and receive reading lists called Pathfind-

ers. These lists are drawn from a bank of 6,000 Lexiled titles. End-of-grade Lexile measures enable students, parents and teachers to design individually targeted summer reading programs which are not guesses or hunches but specific and positive educational interventions.

Lou Fabrizio of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, said that reporting test results in Lexiles makes the measures relevant because now parents, students and teachers can use them to determine a specific plan of action to improve reading. "The reason why we use Lexiles now is because one of the biggest complaints we get about test results is that no one knows what do you do with them when they get them back."

Local school districts in North Carolina are using the Lexile Framework® in a variety of ways. Craven and Gaston County use the framework to align their instructional programs, such as Accelerated Reader, with the North Carolina End-of-Grade test. Prior to the Lexile Framework®, teachers and media coordinators had to rely on the reading levels suggested by individual publishers. Since no common framework existed, schools were never sure whether the instructional materials ordered would turn out to be at the correct levels. With the Lexile Framework®, teachers and librarians can adjust the materials they already have to levels that align with the state assessment.

### Lexiles in "America Reads Now!"

The US Department of Education's "America Reads Now" program recommends Lexile-rated books. Secretary of Education Richard Riley uses the framework in the department's "Checkpoints for Progress" manuals to guide tutors, parents and teachers in their work with students. The million tutors who work in the program are given guides which recommend how to improve reading and explain the Lexile Framework®. The books recommended for reading are also Lexiled.

### Lexiles in Spanish

A Spanish Lexile Framework® has been developed and is on its way into educational practice. Frameworks in French and German are underway. The Spanish framework was developed at the request of states and companies that wanted to meet the needs of students and workers in homes where English is not the first language. The ultimate goal is to build a universal metric for the measurement of readability in any language, equated across languages. This will enable people learning a new language to measure their level of comprehension in a language specific framework of Lexiled tests and Lexiled texts which is further equated across languages. This will enable each student to design the individual instructional program which best helps them reach the level of fluency they require - for whatever reasons.

