

CASE STUDY

Clear Creek Amana Community School District Sees Historic Highs in Reading Scores with WordFlight



Every student who completed the full WordFlight Instructional Program scored as Proficient or Advanced on state end-of-year exams.

Angi Hoyer has high expectations for the almost 1,700 PreK-5 students under her purview as the Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction for the Clear Creek Amana Community School District (CCA). A fast-growing, rural-suburban district skirting two major cities in eastern Iowa, its educators and leaders are dedicated to ensuring students' academic success in all subjects, including literacy.

Historically, the district's elementary schools all score well on state performance measures:

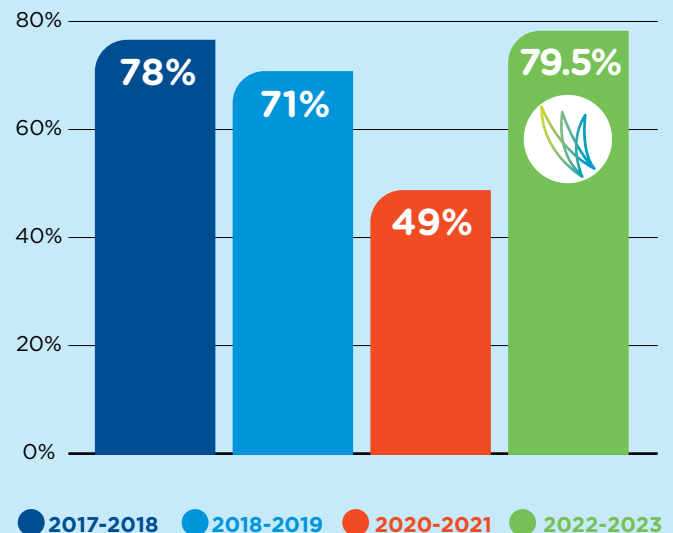
- All the elementary schools graded in the top half of Iowa's ESSER Performance Profile.
- The average score for all third graders on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) English Language Arts (ELA) Composite Achievement Levels was proficient and higher than the state average.

CCA elementary schools have a tradition of following principles of the science of reading and have been using a structured literacy program for four years. But when Angi saw a dip in third-grade reading test scores after the 2021-2022 school year, she knew they

needed to add a new, evidence-based solution to the mix. **CCA looked to WordFlight when students' reading scores weren't meeting those expectations.**

THE CHALLENGE:

The percentage of third graders proficient in reading on the ISASP dropped from 2017 to 2021, so CCA added a new literacy solution: WordFlight.



Third-Grade Reading Proficiency is an Important Milestone

Fifty years of research shows that students who aren't reading at grade level by the end of third grade experience wide-spread negative outcomes. Students who fail to reach this critical milestone continue to struggle academically and are more likely to drop out before earning a high school diploma.¹

Kayla Amalon, Principal of Clear Creek Elementary School, explains: "Third grade is a pivotal year with a major shift in reading. Before third grade, students are learning to read. But after third grade, students are reading to learn."

By focusing on third-grade reading, CCA is laying a cornerstone for long-term student success.

Students Were Missing Foundational Reading Skills

In 2022, Angi felt a strong sense of urgency to address third graders not reading at grade level. The ISASP and FAST CBMreading scores showed gaps in the areas of phonemic and phonological awareness holding students back from reading fluently for comprehension.

"I knew we were sending them on to fourth grade without the ability to actually decode," says Angi. "Teachers were frustrated because they were doing everything they were supposed to do, with everything that they had been given, and the kids just weren't doing better."

Angi knew where to target: automatic word recognition and decoding. Building these skills would help her students become fluent readers for comprehension. After talking with Dr. Carolyn Brown, the Chief Academic Officer overseeing WordFlight to learn more about the products' evidence base, Angi decided to implement it for all third graders in their four elementary schools for the 2022-2023 school year.

WordFlight is an Effective Literacy Intervention for Students in Grades 3+

WordFlight helps students grow and apply their foundational reading skills with ease.

- 1 The quick online **WordFlight Screener** identifies students who struggle with foundational reading skills like automatic word recognition and decoding.
- 2 The patented **WordFlight Diagnostic** provides a detailed report on each student's development of decoding, generalization, and automatic word recognition skills.
- 3 The **WordFlight Instructional Program** provides opportunities for structured practice in an adaptive and engaging game-like environment as well as explicit, teacher-directed instruction. Students experience varied task difficulty, context changes, and on-going assessment, feedback, and personalization.

WordFlight Measures Progress Throughout the Year

The WordFlight Diagnostic measures proficiency in a crucial foundational reading skill: automatic word recognition. WordFlight has the only patented diagnostic assessment of automatic word recognition. It is given to students at the beginning of the WordFlight Instructional Program, the middle, and the end.

Automatic word recognition is the ability to apply the other foundational reading skills with ease. It is a necessary skill for students to master before reaching fluency and the best predictor of fluency.²

Students Achieved Proficiency in the Foundations for Fluency

After completing at least three-fourths of the WordFlight Instructional Program:

87% of the students who scored as “At Some Risk” or “At High Risk” at the beginning of the year scored as “Proficient” on the final diagnostic.

Tessa Stevens, a third-grade teacher at Clear Creek Elementary and WordFlight user, appreciates seeing the progress students make through WordFlight’s reports. The three levels of performance are color-coded for easy analysis.

She says, “I’m seeing a lot of progress with my students this year. I had a lower proficiency group of students so at the beginning of

the year many landed in the [yellow] zone, or ‘At Some Risk.’ But, everybody who has taken the post-diagnostic ended up in the green, or ‘Proficient.’ I’m very happy with that.”

WordFlight Motivates Students and Builds Confidence

WordFlight is designed to keep students engaged and motivated through games and characters, varying task difficulty, and adapting to each students’ level. When asked what they thought of using WordFlight, the third graders said WordFlight:

Is Motivational

“I would tell a kid that is just starting that you will be able to read better and spell more words without getting them wrong. The different levels and characters are cool.” — Cruz

Is FUN

“It is really fun. It doesn’t feel like you are learning, but you are.” — Noella

Has Engaging Stories and Games

“I like the stories, like the one where Jim and Jan find a robber. The questions after the story are hard, but I get them!” — Dexter



Students Who Used WordFlight with Fidelity Scored Best on State Tests

Evidence shows that students get the best results when they use the WordFlight online instructional program 20 minutes per day four or five days per week, with a goal of 60-80 minutes per week for at least six months.

Tessa echoes this: "I recommend making sure to get in that 60 to 80 minutes. You will definitely see a positive outcome with the program."

Clear Creek Elementary uses it for 20 minutes each day. Kayla says: "We worked really hard last year on problem solving to build WordFlight into our schedule and make it meaningful and purposeful. We tried it across different settings, and found it worked best in the general education setting. We wanted to provide enough time for it, but also balance it with all the other expectations that come with being a classroom teacher."

Tessa seamlessly integrated WordFlight into her class's schedule: "I have a rotation schedule on the board. When there's the WordFlight logo, they know to automatically grab their computer. WordFlight usually takes up about two 15-minute blocks. That gives them five minutes to gather their things and log in, and five minutes at the end to put them away."

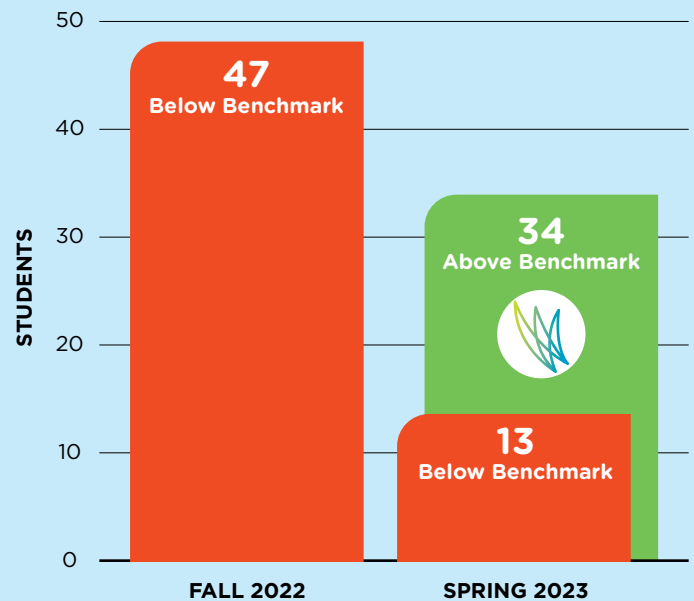
The district found that the more of WordFlight students completed, the better they scored on two external reading measures:

- **The FAST™ CBMreading:** Provides data on words per minute read and percent accurate.
- **Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) ELA Composite Achievement Levels:** Measures student achievement and understanding of the Iowa Core Standards in ELA.

96% of students that completed two-thirds of WordFlight scored as Proficient or Advanced on the ELA ISASP.

100% of students who completed the full WordFlight scored as Proficient or Advanced on the ELA ISASP.

Students Scoring Below Benchmark on FAST CBMreading Decreased After Implementing WordFlight



↓72% reduction in students scoring below benchmark on the FAST CBMreading from the previous year.



CCA Brings Back WordFlight for a Second Year at Teachers' Request

After seeing the improvements their students made on test scores for the 2022-2023 school year, the district's third-grade teachers asked their leadership to bring back WordFlight for the new school year.

"The teachers said it was because our data from the FAST assessment and ISASP really shows that WordFlight was a huge part in our student success," recalls Angi.

For the 2023-2024 school year, the district again used WordFlight with third graders, focusing on those who scored "At Some" or "At High Risk" on the WordFlight Screener. This year's students saw repeated success, with three-fourths reaching proficiency by May 2024.

In addition, the fourth graders who used WordFlight the previous year have continued to show reading success.

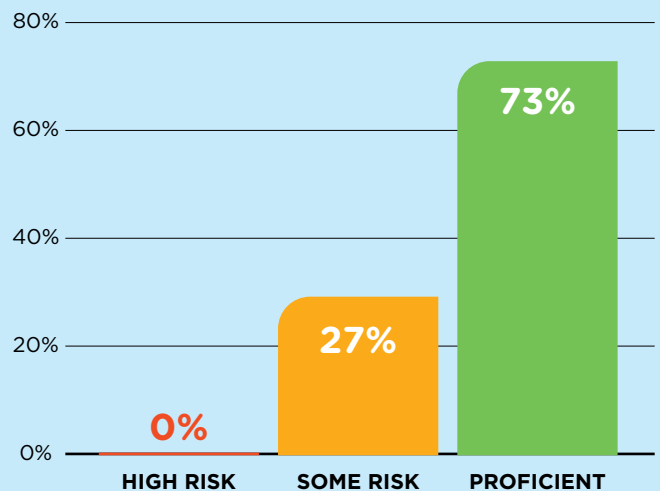
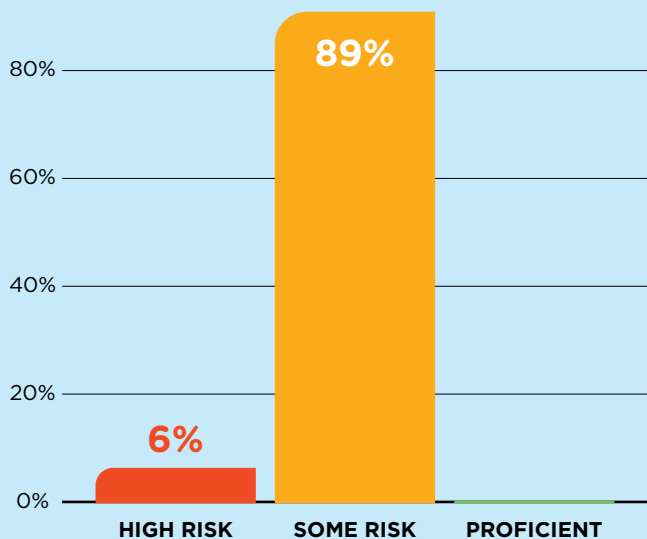
Of the fourth graders who:

- started the 2022-2023 school year below benchmark on the FAST CBMreading
- but reached benchmark by the end of the year after using WordFlight
- all but 1 student are still at/above benchmark in the 2023-2024 school year (94%).

Kayla notes improvement in proficiency in her school:

"Not only did our teachers do a great job of growing their students in their classroom, but they also set them up for success in the years to come."

Proficiency in automatic word recognition soared for students who used WordFlight in the 2023-2024 school year (n=93)



Get in touch to see how WordFlight can help your students.

For more information, please visit wordflight.com,
email info@wordflight.com or call (888) 701-3009



From WordFlight to Fluency



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¹Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013). *Early warning confirmed: A research update on third-grade reading*. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/resources/early-warning-confirmed/>. ²Roembke, T.C., Hazeltine, E., Reed K.D., & McMurray, B. (2019). Automaticity of Word Recognition Is a Unique Predictor of Reading Fluency in Middle-School Students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(2), 314-330. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/edu0000279>.