

CASE STUDY

Piecing Together the Fluency Puzzle with WordFlight

A Success Story from Van Meter Elementary School

Van Meter, IA



The School

Van Meter Elementary in Van Meter, IA, is part of the Van Meter Community School District just outside of Des Moines and serves over 500 students in grades PreK-5. The district aims to personalize learning for each student's success through competency-based education, preparing them to be college, career, and global ready graduates.

A Literacy Intervention Roadblock

Kelly Hagen is the Elementary Reading Specialist, working with students who need literacy intervention in grades PK-5. After monitoring student reading test scores over the 2023 school year, she knew her students were facing major learning gaps, struggling to quickly recognize and decode multisyllabic words. "Transitioning from 2nd-3rd grade, a lot of my readers still really struggled with word recognition, automaticity, and being able to do it fluently and quickly." Kelly was introduced to WordFlight by Van Meter Principal Cody Tibbetts and, after seeing end-of-year test scores, knew she wanted to dive deeper into how the program could help her students.



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A New Approach: Piloting WordFlight

Interested in the program's focus on automatic word recognition, Kelly and her team applied and received a WordFlight grant. She began using the program with a group of 15 third graders at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year. "The thing that I loved the most about [WordFlight] was the amount of multi-syllabic words it uses," she explained, "The activities within WordFlight force learning and practice with automaticity in a way I haven't seen with other programs."

After a quick and easy implementation with the WordFlight team, Kelly helped her students transition to using the program by showing them a video of how it worked, explaining to them the importance of WordFlight's diagnostic screening. "They were very excited about it," she said. "Sometimes getting something new is kind of exciting." From there, her students began using WordFlight independently during their regular ELA class time, aiming for 60-80 minutes weekly.

Now when Ms. Hagen meets with students for intervention, she is able to dive deeper into each of their specific needs, leveraging WordFlight's small group lesson plans to target specific skills where they may need more practice.



Measurable Growth in Fluency and Comprehension

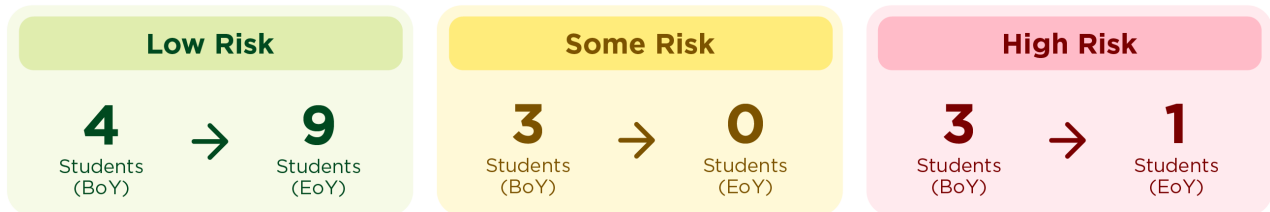
In just a few short months, Ms. Hagen has seen big improvements in her students' fluency and comprehension skills, citing progress monitoring that traced students' scores back to before third grade. Ms. Hagen stated the changes in beginning to mid-year reading scores were striking. "What was interesting is that some kids who haven't passed that test through most of second-grade, had passed again for the first time this past January. We saw some significant growth. WordFlight is

definitely a piece of that puzzle that's helped them finally see some results." how the program could help her students.

Her students also continue to be excited about using the program. "Their talk about [WordFlight] is more than any other talk I've heard from them about other programs," she said. "One of my students still cannot wait to tell me when he passes his units." Ms. Hagen added that her students' excitement speaks a lot to the way WordFlight works and helps them learn "because [usually] by this point in the year, the kids are kind of over it."

Measurable Growth in Fluency and Comprehension

These are only the students in third grade who are working on WordFlight. This chart shows beginning of the year A Reading scores and a CBM score. The third column then compares the middle of the year winter test scores and CBM scores. Red is anyone who is under the goal score, yellow are those that were close, and green is anyone who is on or above the goal score.



Student	CBM BoY	Percentile	CBM MoY	CBM EoY	Percentile	Growth in rank
1	33	8	41	61	7	-1
2	44	12	82	94	47	35
3	30	7	86	95	48	41
5	71	27	108	133	82	55
8	90	43	100	118	70	27
10	83	36	92	112	65	29
11	100	54	142	168	96	42
12	77	31	111	126	76	45
15	106	59	119	121	73	14
16	107	60	130	124	75	15



Collaborative, Data-Driven Instruction

Ms. Hagen monitors WordFlight's data reports daily so she knows exactly where each student is at in the program, if they've completed their minutes each week, and if they need extra support on any specific skill. As her students move through the program she regularly "look[s] at the pre- and post-test information to ensure they're growing and see how they're doing."

The Van Meter instructional coach also pulls together weekly reports on each student's level and unit, and shares it with all third grade teachers. This allows for easier collaboration between Ms. Hagen and her students' other teachers — ensuring students receive the help they need to succeed.

Continuing the Fluency Journey with WordFlight

Looking to next year, Kelly and her third-grade team plan to keep WordFlight in their toolkit, in a similar format with their invention students. What is her advice to other schools considering WordFlight? Make time for data check-ins and use student progress as a motivator.

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[My students and I] can talk about how great they're doing on their levels and celebrate," she added. "If you have the opportunity to apply for the grant, why not? You should do it!"

About WordFlight

WordFlight is a research-based literacy intervention designed to help students achieve reading fluency and build their confidence in reading. Through the engaging, structured and systematic practice combined with teacher-led instruction, **WordFlight makes learning stick.**

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