

Eminence Elementary Succeeds Using *Common Core Coach* for Core ELA Instruction

Eminence Elementary School in rural Kentucky found the resources it needed to implement the Common Core Standards with [Common Core Coach](#). By using Coach as their primary teaching tool and modeling their own assessments on those in Coach, they were able to align their teaching to the new standards and better prepare students for success on the new state test—the Kentucky Performance Rating for Education Progress, or K-PREP. Between 2011–2012 and 2012–2013, the number of students at Eminence Elementary performing at the lowest achievement level (Novice) decreased by 10% in 3rd grade and 13.5% in 4th grade. In the 3rd grade, students performing at the highest achievement level increased by 21%.

School Profile

Eminence Elementary, Henry County, Kentucky
Metro Status: Rural
Grades: PreK-5
Enrollment: 243

The Challenge

The 2012-2013 school year was the second year of CCSS implementation in Kentucky schools. At Eminence Elementary, the 3rd & 4th grade ELA teacher found the basal to be out of date, and it required too much supplementation to adapt to the new standards. Looking for a resource more closely aligned to CCSS, the ELA teachers have used *Common Core Coach* as their core curriculum and supplemented it with other resources—including the basal.

Overview

During the 2011-2012 school year, the first year of Common Core implementation in Kentucky, teacher Jenna Ashby grew frustrated with the basal textbook for 3rd and 4th grade language arts. Kentucky was an early adopter of the Common Core Standards, and the language arts text they used was not aligned to the new standards. As a result,

Ashby had to find her own resources to supplement the basal. With the permission of her principal, Ashby chose to use *Common Core Coach* as her primary curriculum throughout the 2012-2013 school year, as it was more closely aligned to the new standards.

Keys to Success

Teacher Jenna Ashby credited two things for her increased ELA scores:

(1) using *Common Core Coach* to precisely target the standards she wanted to teach, and (2) changing the method and frequency of her assessments.

“Besides reading, each *Coach* lesson tied in all the ELA standards—speaking, listening, and writing, every part of it. So I was able to include different types of language arts in my reading block and cover more standards. It was easier to touch all the standards, whereas the year before, it was hit or miss.”

“I used *Coach* as a guide and followed it, but I would include other things and tweak it just a little bit based on my students’ needs and the school’s needs with writing portfolios and other things like that,” said Ashby.

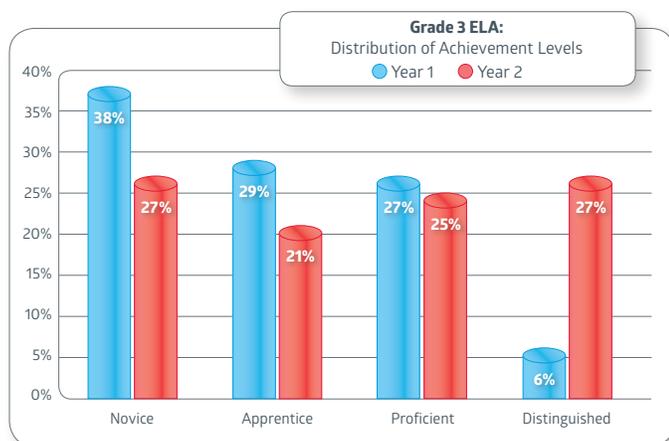
She continued, **“Because a lot of the [Coach] reading content [was] science or social studies, I was able to bring different content areas into language arts, so the students would be able to explore a little more if they already had the reading basics.”**

Teachers at Eminence also were fortunate to have an instructional coach who taught them how to write their own assessments so they would better match the new end-of-the-year assessments. The process of planning and assessing each unit was instrumental in covering all ELA standards by year’s end.

“I... completely changed the way I assessed students. I would adapt basically what the *Common Core Coach* had written and add more to it. So I modeled my test after what *Coach* had done and took it from there...This way I was able to tie every one of the questions back to a standard.”

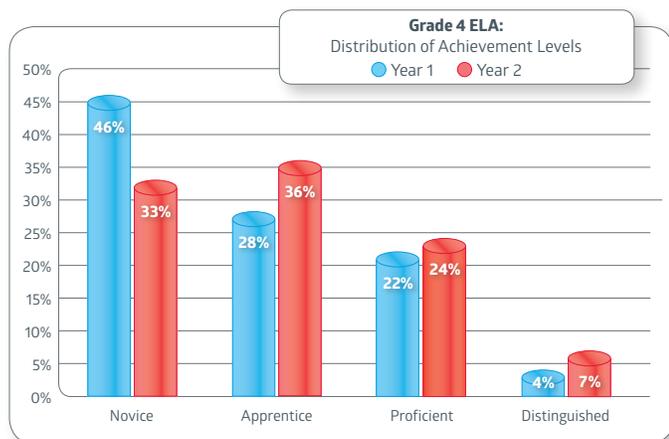
Results

Year-over-year third-grade scores increased dramatically, with an 11% decline in students at the Novice level (the lowest performance level) from 38% to 27% and the performance at the Distinguished level increasing by 21%.



Source: KY Department of Education/SRC/Data Set

At grade 4, the most important result was the drop of 13.5% in students at the Novice level (the lowest performance level), with corresponding increases in students performing at the other levels.



Source: KY Department of Education/SRC/Data Set

When asked why her third-graders made greater gains than her fourth-graders, Ashby responded that while she didn’t teach them any differently, the third-grade was a smaller class and the strongest group of third graders she had ever taught, while her fourth-grade class was larger and included special education students.

“I was able to push the third graders a little harder because they were more advanced than most third grades, and they were strong readers and loved to be challenged,” said Ashby.

Conclusion

In 2013-2014, Rebekah Murphy replaced Jenna Ashby as the 3rd grade ELA teacher. **“I’ve used some of the stories in the basal, but basically the *Common Core Coach* has been my core instruction,”** she said.

“The teacher before me (Ashby) really liked using the *Coach* books as her core instruction, and I have really enjoyed using them as well. I also like using the peer review sheets because [they] prompt the students, giving them questions to answer about each other’s writing, and [the review sheets] guide them through the discussion process with another student,” said Murphy.

Ashby and Murphy reflect different perspectives: Ashby is a veteran teacher and Murphy is relatively new. Because Kentucky was an early adopter of the Common Core standards, Ashby immediately recognized that the textbooks were not adequate to meet the new standards. **“Because I had already had training in the Common Core for two years before using the program, I could see automatically that *Coach* aligned with the standards,”** she said.

For her part, Murphy found that *Coach* supported her as a new teacher. **“It was really helpful to me as a new teacher to see the standards explained and already written out so I didn’t have to create the practices for students to do. It provided opportunities for the students to practice their skills and for me to check their understanding. So a lot of my work was lessened because of the *Coach* books.”**

In recommending *Common Core Coach* to other educators, Murphy said, **“if there’s a standard and you’re not understanding exactly what it’s saying, the *Coach* books are a great resource to use to help you understand and give you assessments.”**

The use of *Common Core Coach* as their primary ELA curriculum allowed Eminence Elementary’s third and fourth grade teachers to precisely target the new Common Core standards. By using *Coach* as their primary teaching tool and modeling their own assessments on those in *Coach*, they were able to align their teaching to the new standards and better prepare students for success on the new state test—the Kentucky Performance Rating for Education Progress, or K-PREP.

Both grades achieved noteworthy year-over-year gains in test scores as a result of using *Common Core Coach* as their core curriculum.