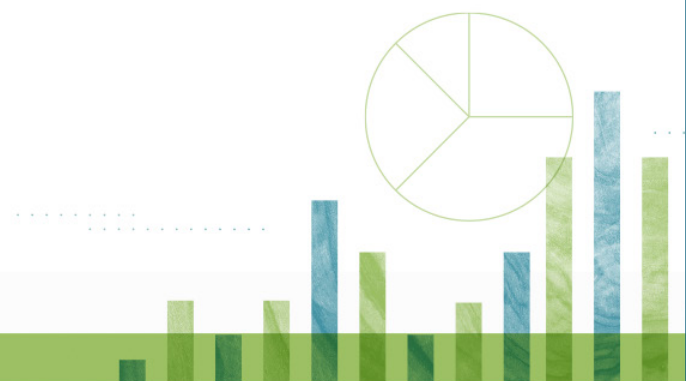# Reading Horizons®

Lumpkin
COUNTY SCHOOLS

Research Study

The Impact of the Reading Horizons® Method Implementation on Student Learning

Lumpkin County Schools
2023–2024 Academic Year

DESIGN MEETS ESSA EVIDENCE TIER 3 PROMISING RESULTS

Where reading momentum begins™

Executive Summary

During the 2023–2024 academic year, Lumpkin County Schools in Dahlonega, Georgia, implemented the *Reading Horizons® Elevate* (RHE) curriculum, which features the Reading Horizons® (RH) method based on the science of reading, with 272 students in grades 4–5.

Lumpkin County Schools, Reading Horizons®, and LearnPlatform by Instructure collaborated to evaluate the impact of RHE usage on NWEA MAP achievement scores (published by Northwest Evaluation Association).

Researchers at LearnPlatform by Instructure found a significant, positive association, with a moderate effect size, between RHE software usage and their end-of-year NWEA MAP Reading scores. The results indicated that students in classrooms with higher course rates outperformed those in classrooms with lower progress on the end-of-year NWEA MAP Reading assessments.

Introduction

During the 2023–2024 academic year, Lumpkin County Schools in Dahlonega, Georgia, implemented the *Reading Horizons® Elevate* (RHE) curriculum, which features the Reading Horizons® (RH) method based on the science of reading. The program was used, with 272 students in grades 4–5.

RHE delivers engaging, explicit, and systematic phonics instruction tailored to older students. It incorporates a multisensory approach rooted in Orton-Gillingham principles designed to build on students' existing knowledge. The program offers structure sequenced lessons that reinforce foundational literacy skills. Each sound of the English language is explicitly taught alongside its corresponding letter(s), empowering students to master phonetic patterns essential for fluent reading.

The RHE program emphasizes the Five Phonetic Skills, which enable students to confidently recognize vowel patterns and decode multisyllabic words. It also introduces the Two Decoding Skills to help students tackle complex words, making reading more accessible by reducing the cognitive load. The multisensory approach enhances learning and memory by engaging auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modalities, ensuring that the instruction is impactful and memorable.

A unique marking system draws students' attention to key patterns in the English language, providing visual cues that support accurate pronunciation. Throughout the program, students engage in interactive activities designed to reinforce and apply the skills they learn, fostering confidence and competence in reading.

RHE includes enhanced digital tools that provide personalized learning experiences tailored to the unique needs of older students. The program incorporates continuous progress monitoring through assessments the *Reading Horizons® Elevate* Diagnostic Assessment and other built-in tools designed to offer real-time data on student performance. This data allows educators to adjust instruction, ensuring that students receive the targeted support they need to succeed in literacy.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IN LUMPKIN COUNTY SCHOOLS

Lumpkin County Schools in Georgia has five PK–12 schools, serving 3,749 students and 258 teachers. The population is 92 percent White, 1 percent Black or African American, 5 percent Hispanic or Latino, 1 percent Asian, and 3 percent Two or More Races. Approximately 57.75 percent of families are low-income.

During the 2023–2024 school year, Lumpkin County Schools implemented the direct instruction curriculum and software for the fourth consecutive year. They supported this implementation by providing in-person professional learning through Reading Horizons to all teachers prior to the program's launch. All three elementary schools implemented RHE in grades 4–5 as their Tier 1, 2, and 3 phonics curriculum. A typical Tier 1 lesson occurred in whole-group instruction, and Tier 2 or 3 lessons occurred in a small group daily, for approximately 30 minutes, from August through May.

IMPACT STUDY DESIGN

During the 2023–2024 academic year, Lumpkin County School District collaborated with RH to explore the relationship between student usage of RHE and learning outcomes in grades 4–5.

The following guiding research questions informed the study design:

1. To what extent did students in grades 4–5 use the RHE program software during the 2023–2024 school year, as measured by total logins, minutes per login, and course progress?

2. To what extent does student usage of RHE correlate with student performance, as measured by NWEA MAP Reading scores?

LUMPKIN COUNTY SCHOOLS

This study employed a one-group, pre-post, quasi-experimental design. It was conducted in three elementary schools in Lumpkin County Schools in Georgia during the 2023–24 school year. The analysis included 35 teachers and 268 students in grades 4–5. Researchers used NWEA MAP Fluency assessment scores (i.e., Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Language Comprehension) as the student achievement outcome. They also conducted multilevel models examining to whether differences in RHE usage predicted student outcomes.

RESULTS

1. To what extent did students in grades 4–5 use the RHE program software during the 2023–2024 school year, as measured by total logins, minutes per login, and course progress?

The RHE software usage data provided a direct measure of student-level engagement with program content and instruction. Researchers analyzed three key software usage metrics:: total number of logins, course progress, and average minutes per login (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of 2023–24 Elevate software usage among 4th–5th grade students (n = 272)

Elevate software usage metric	Average	Range
Total number of student logins	90	3–416
Minutes per student login	13	0–31
Percentage of course completed	29%	0–84%

Students using the RHE software logged in an average of 90 times during the 2023–2024 school year (SD = 75.41, range: 3–416) and spent 13 minutes on the platform per login (SD = 3.91, spent an average of = 0–31). On average, students completed slightly more than one-quarter of the RHE software course (29 percent, SD = 0.18), with some completing as much as 84 percent.

2. To what extent does student usage of RHE correlate with student performance, as measured by NWEA MAP Reading scores?

Researchers conducted regression models to examine the relationship between RHE usage and student NWEA MAP Reading performance. The final analytic sample included students in grades 4–5 in the district who used the RHE software and had scores available for both the beginning and end-of-year NWEA MAP Reading administrations (n = 242). All analyses included student-level covariates (i.e., baseline NWEA MAP Reading scores, grade level, and special education status) to minimize selection bias.

Results indicated a significant, positive association between student RHE software usage and end-of-year NWEA MAP Reading scores. Specifically, students who made greater course progress outperformed their peers on the end-of-year NWEA MAP Reading assessment (p < 0.05, see Figure 1). Other software usage metrics were not significantly related to student outcomes.
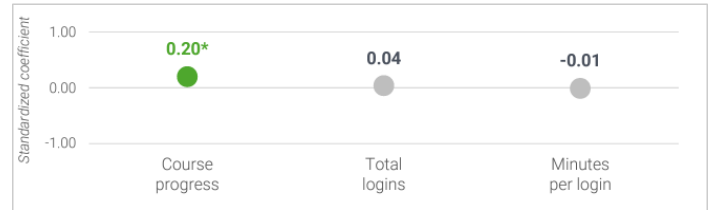

Figure 1. Regression coefficients for association between RHE software usage and NWEA MAP Reading performance

Researchers analyzed whether student outcomes differed by RHE software usage group (i.e., **between classrooms** where students completed more or less than 30 percent of the course). Results indicated that students in classrooms with a higher course completion rate performed better on end-of-year NWEA MAP Reading assessments than those in classrooms with less progress (p < 0.05, see Figure 2).
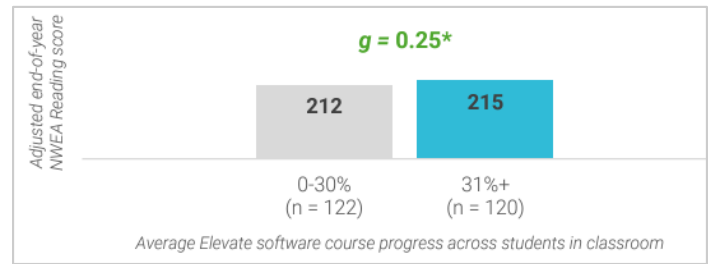

Figure 2. Comparison of NWEA MAP Reading performance by classroom-level course completion rate

CONCLUSIONS

This study satisfies ESSA evidence requirements for Level III (Promising Evidence) due to the positive, statistically significant correlational results associating higher RHE **software course progress** with better student NWEA MAP Reading performance in grades 4–5. Specifically, this study met the following criteria for Level III:

- Correlational design
- Proper design and implementation
- Statistical controls through covariates
- At least one statistically significant, positive finding