



From Phonics to Reading™ Helps West Feliciana Parish Schools Become the #1 School District in Louisiana in 2025

A Case Study from Bains Elementary
School in West Feliciana



From
Phonics to Reading.

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Summary

Not satisfied with the percentage of their students in grades 1 – 3 who were proficient in reading, in 2023 the West Feliciana Parish Schools adopted **Sadlier’s *From Phonics to Reading by Wiley Blevins*** curriculum to support more individualized literacy development. After two years of comprehensive implementation, individual student growth and schoolwide growth in reading proficiency levels at Bains Elementary School contributed to the recognition of the school district as the number one district within Louisiana for student achievement in the 2024-25 school year.

Challenge

Combined with a renewed national focus on the Science of Reading, the Louisiana legislature passed Act 422, the Third-Grade Retention Law, during their 2023 legislative session. The law mandates that third-grade students in traditional public schools must meet specific reading proficiency standards to be promoted to the fourth grade or they will be retained in third grade. This new legislation prompted many school districts to re-evaluate their phonics programs and literacy curriculum.

The West Feliciana Parish Schools has a long legacy of effectively leveraging data to inform and inspire new practices and academic solutions. Upon reviewing their beginning-of-the-year assessment (BOY) reading proficiency levels of students in grades 1-3 in Fall 2022, they decided that they needed to make a change in their phonics curriculum. While 61% of the students in grades 1-3 at Bains Elementary were at or above the reading proficiency level using the DIBELS assessments, 39% of their students were not. That was not acceptable to the district or the community.

Bains Elementary School is one of two elementary schools within the rural West Feliciana Parish Schools in Louisiana. The school serves approximately 800 students in grades 1-5. Within Bains Elementary, 44% of the students are eligible for the free or reduced lunch program, an indicator of family poverty.¹ The West Feliciana Parish has a community population of just over 15,000 and is located within the greater Baton Rouge metropolitan area. Since fall 2023, Bains Elementary has used Sadlier’s *From Phonics to Reading by Wiley Blevins* solution as their primary literacy curriculum.

¹ https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&DistrictID=2201980&ID=220198001474



Comparatively, 69% of the students in the top school district in the state at that time were at or above proficiency benchmarks. The West Feliciana leadership team knew that with the right solution they could improve and build a new sustainable culture of reading proficiency within their classrooms.

The district team evaluated the state recommended products at that time but found those solutions lacked the essential components they felt were necessary to advance literacy for all students in West Feliciana. **Their essential components included:**

- **A singular, comprehensive curriculum for all students, not just for intervention**
- **Appropriate for all levels from Kindergarten through Grade 3**
- **Vertical alignment across the grades, an important element for them**
- **An easy to use, rigorous curriculum for teachers and students**

To improve our student literacy percentages, we had to address two issues as a leadership team. First, we realized that simply focusing on the district or school level composite scores was inadequate to truly evaluate our success. We had to look at individual students and their proficiency levels to understand how to move all students to greater literacy. Second, we noticed a trend that middle of the year growth was not sustained when we evaluated our end-of-the-year data results. It quickly became apparent to us as a data-driven district team, we needed to adopt a new literacy curriculum that could help us personalize learning for each student and build sustainable growth.

Jodi Lemoine
Director of Accountability, West Feliciana Parish Schools

Solution

After extensive research by the leadership team, the West Feliciana Parish Schools adopted **Sadlier's *From Phonics to Reading with Wiley Blevins*** as their exclusive phonics curriculum for Kindergarten through Grade 3 classrooms. The curriculum met all their desired requirements. Their first year of implementation was the 2023-24 school year across all classrooms in their elementary schools. The school district's culture of using data results to inform and personalize instruction continues today. The school district utilizes DIBELS® (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) measures to understand students' acquisition of literacy skills and the MAP Reading Fluency assessments from NWEA as both a screener and to evaluate student growth throughout the school year. The school district monitors literacy development for all students by evaluating both the DIBELS and MAP Reading Fluency data three times a year with a beginning-of-the-year assessment (BOY), middle-of-the-year assessment (MOY) and an end-of-the-year assessment (EOY).



In third grade we are basically building on what was taught in first and second grade. But the reading comprehensive part becomes more important in third grade. With *From Phonics to Reading*, the students have to be able to answer questions about what they are reading, and they must have fluency in their reading. Many times, students don't get to read in our ELA lessons, but with this program they get the opportunity to read to us, to partner read, to read individually to themselves. That is a very good component of ***From Phonics to Reading***.

Britnee Cazalot
Grade 3 Teacher, Bains Elementary School



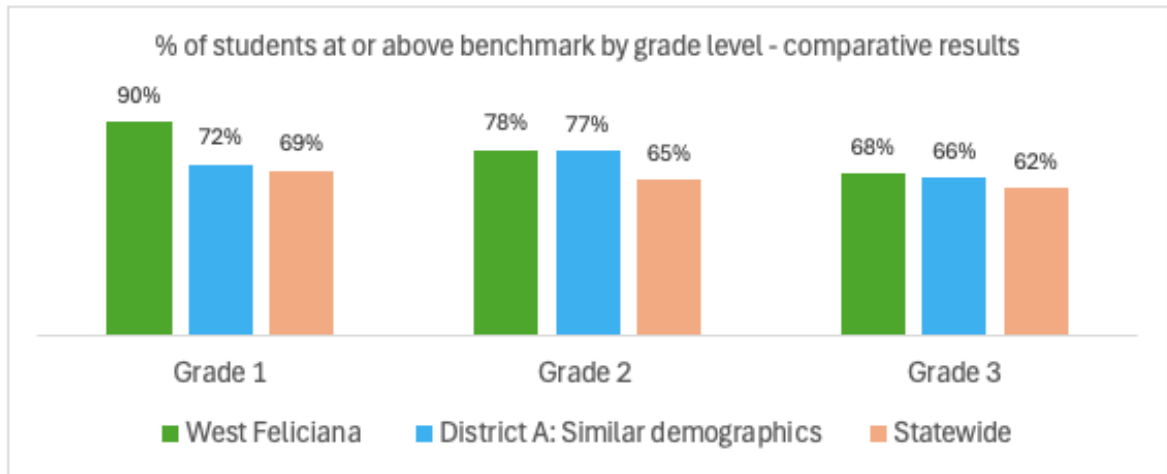
Results

The West Feliciana Parish Schools' leadership team identified the following significant outcomes from their two-year adoption of ***Sadlier's From Phonics to Reading with Wiley Blevins*** literacy curriculum in grades 1 – 3. These outcomes contributed to the school district's recognition as the #1 district in Louisiana for student performance in 2025.

- ★ **The percentage of students in grades 1 – 3 at Bains Elementary School with a composite reading score at or above benchmark on the DIBELS assessment increased by 32% in one school year.**
 - Fall 2024: 60% of students in grades 1-3 were assessed at being “at or above benchmark” in overall reading proficiency.
 - Spring 2025: 79% of students in grades 1-3 were now at that benchmark level
- ★ **Consequently, the percentage of students that were still below benchmark decreased by 17 percentage points** from 39% at the beginning of the school year to 22% at the end of the year.
- ★ **Bains Elementary third-graders surged from the 53rd to 80th percentile in reading over three years.** In the 2022 beginning-of-the-year assessment using NWEA MAP, the Mean RIT Score for 3rd grade students at Bains Elementary School was 184.0, placing those students in the 53rd percentile in reading. The Mean RIT Score for 3rd graders at Bains in fall 2025 is now 190.5, with those students placing in the 80th percentile in reading.
- ★ **Growth in reading is continuing at Bains even in grade 3.** Based upon the middle of the year NWEA MAP measure in winter 2026, the 3rd graders' Mean RIT Score has now increased to 199.2 and the 88th percentile.

★ The percentage of West Feliciana students in grades 1 – 3 who were at or above literacy benchmarks at the end of the 2024-25 school year exceeds the Louisiana statewide results, and results from a neighboring district with similar student demographics. For example, while 69% of students in grade 1 statewide were at the “on or above proficiency level” in spring 2025, 90% of the West Feliciana first graders scored at that level.

Spring 2025 Grade 1-3 Literacy Screener Results - % On/Above Benchmark (EOY)



We know ***From Phonics to Reading*** is helping our students every day. Just this school year, I have a special education student in my first-grade class who transferred into our district. She was supposed to be in second grade but only knew 3 letters. After using this program, she is now spelling CVC words and even writing. It has been so exciting for me to see her growth in just few months. She is still below benchmark levels, and we have more work to do but her literacy gap is closing.

Anita Ewing
Grade 1 Teacher, Bains Elementary School

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