



# Starting Early Learners on the Right Path in Wayland, Michigan

Baker Elementary School in Wayland, Michigan



Larinda Olds,  
Title I Teacher  
Consultant



394 students  
Grades pre-K to 2



Reading Eggs



94% Caucasian  
3% Hispanic  
54% free/reduced lunch

## The Challenge:

When it comes to reading readiness skills for early learners, students become more proficient the more they practice. Being a Title I school, the staff at Baker Elementary School knew that some of its most economically disadvantaged students probably lack materials at home with which to practice their budding reading skills. If the school could make a supplemental reading program available at home, all of its students would have a greater chance at success.

**As a Title I school that only serves students up to second grade, Baker Elementary School in Wayland, MI, realizes it needs to start teaching fundamental reading skills as early as possible in order to affect learning gains. Baker's staff, including principal**

**Celeste Diehm and Title I teacher consultant Larinda Olds, knew that the solution was just as much about making resources available to the students at home as at school.**

### **How They Did It:**

With confidence in its classroom teachers and aides, the Baker staff knew it needed an outside solution to change the paradigm for its youngest students: kindergarteners and a version of pre-K it calls "Young Fives". Baker was excited to find Edmentum's Reading Eggs program and selected it in the summer of 2012 based on the program's organization, bright design, and ease of use. Because parents would have to become just as proficient at guiding students through the program as teachers, simplicity was important.

During kindergarten screening, all incoming Baker parents are trained on Reading Eggs so that their children can hit the ground running once school starts. The program is used as a supplement in the classroom as well as in the home, effectively doubling a student's practice at a crucial time for reading skill building. As the program focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, students begin reading in their kindergarten or Young Fives class with a greater aptitude in foundational skills.



We wanted a supplemental reading solution that was easy to use so we could train parents on the system and the students could use it at home as well as in the classroom.



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### **Success:**

As the demographics shift in the U.S., even schools in rural Michigan like Baker Elementary have a growing English language learner (ELL) population. Foundational reading skills are especially difficult to learn if English is not one's first language or is not spoken at home. Thanks to the school's Reading Eggs initiative, Olds has noticed a change in its ELLs. "We're starting to see great results with our ELL students. They seem much more prepared to start reading."

Overall, as shown on the system's reports, as well as anecdotally by the teachers at Baker, this year's crop of Young Fives and kindergarteners are much more prepared to excel in reading as they move through the rest of the grade levels at Baker. Some of the teachers even reported improvement in the short time students had with Reading Eggs between the kindergarten screening and the start of the 2012—13 school year. "Our kindergarten students, in particular, started the school year with more advanced readiness skills than in years past," Olds reported.

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### **The Future:**

Baker has met some impressive goals for itself, vowing that 80 percent of its students will be assessed as proficient in reading by 2013's Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) testing. When the success of 2012—13's kindergartners and Young Five's is projected out, the school expects all of its students to be proficient once these students start testing in second grade.

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