

Glen Lake Elementary School



Time for a Change

After five consecutive years of stagnant performance on standardized ELA assessments, Glen Lake Elementary School (GLES) staff decided it was time for a new ELA curriculum. In addition to lagging test performance, the school recognized another persistent problem: students did not see themselves as readers and neither did their teachers. Limited exposure to early foundational skills instruction, limited time for independent reading, and lack of relatable and accessible reading material were challenges. Low student motivation and self-esteem, misbehavior during reading instruction, and inconsistent academic performance across all content areas signaled the need for a change.



I learned more about the Science of Reading through IRLA than any of the classes, podcasts, or professional trainings I've attended. Seeing the growth of my students in each literacy component helped me know them as readers like I never have before.”

—Teacher

About the School

Glen Lake Elementary School (GLES) is part of Glen Lake Community Schools, located in Maple City, Michigan.

- 374 PreK to 5 students
- 36% of students are from economically disadvantaged families
- 14% of students receive special education services
- Less than 1% of students are English Language Learners

About the District

- 706 PreK to 12 students
- 1 Elementary school
- 1 Middle school
- 1 High school

The Search for High Quality Instructional Materials

The question “*What do our students need?*” guided GLES teachers as they vetted and compared six ELA programs. Teachers analyzed each program’s alignment to the Science of Reading using the Reading League Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines. ARC Core rose to the top. Teachers cited ARC Core’s student-centered pedagogy, units that blend knowledge-building with reading and writing skill development, the authentic and developmentally appropriate high-interest content, and structured daily independent reading time as reasons ARC Core is what GLES students need.

Impressive Outcomes During Pilot

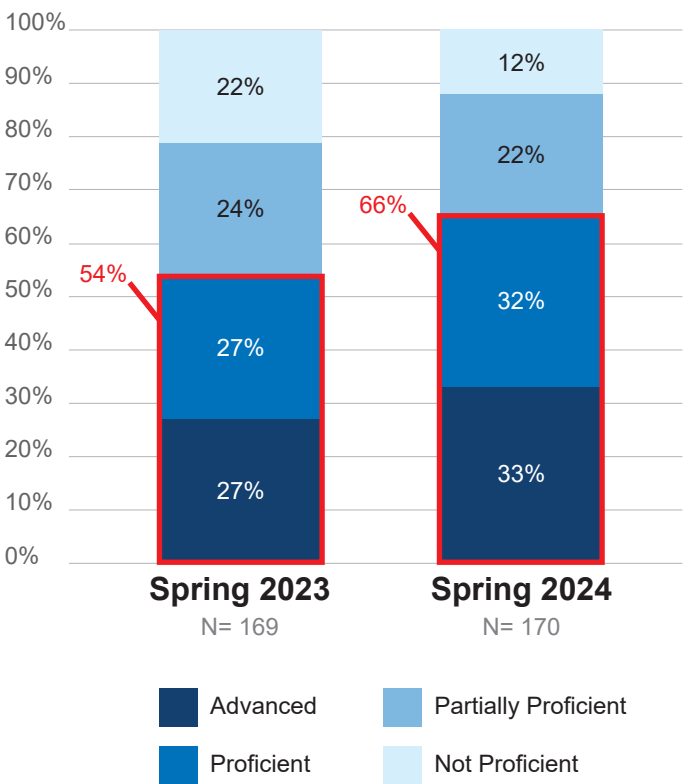
In fall of 2023–24, GLES piloted ARC Core in one of three Kindergarten classrooms, one of three Grade 2 classrooms, and all three Grade 4 classrooms. All K-5 classrooms piloted ARC’s formative assessment, the Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA), and IRLA Toolkits for small group intervention.

After six months of using ARC materials, GLES students showed remarkable progress and enthusiasm for reading. The percentage of Grade 3–5 students scoring proficient and advanced on the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) increased from 54% in spring of 2023 to 66% in spring of 2024 (see Figure 1).

Results of a student reading engagement survey and an increase in monthly library circulation (1,650 more books per month compared to 2022–23) point to a rise in motivation to read. During the ARC pilot, GLES students checked out 3,802 books per month, on average – about 10 books per student each month! Teachers also reported changes in student engagement during ELA instruction:

- “There are deeper discussions and thinking happening each day.”
- “Student writing improved – the depth, content, and independence has blown me away.”
- “Students are invested in their growth and have a clear path to move themselves forward.”

Figure 1
M-STEP ELA Grades 3–5



Note: M-STEP data is based on preliminary results.

The pilot materials had a profound impact on classroom pedagogy and how teachers viewed students' learning potential. A teacher who piloted the IRLA and IRLA Toolkits said the materials helped her better understand the Science of Reading. A teacher who piloted ARC Core reported that the shift from the prior teacher-led and scripted curriculum to ARC's student-focused approach has allowed teachers to better meet students where they are. Others noted that ARC Core has helped them better understand and address individual students' needs.

Over the course of the ARC pilot, GLES teachers witnessed their students falling in love with reading, punctuated by unsolicited feedback from parents expressing excitement because their child wants to read. A teacher who piloted ARC Core said "When it comes to

student learning, for me the biggest thing truly has been the love of reading coming back! They are inspired, eager and enthusiastic."

By May of 2023–24, 100% of GLES teachers supported the decision to adopt ARC Core with the IRLA and IRLA Toolkits for the 2024-25 school year.

Principal Ryan Schrock shared "Our success has caught the attention of school leaders across northern Michigan, who are eager to learn more about our strategies and tools. We look forward to sharing our experiences to enhance reading education region wide. Glen Lake Elementary remains dedicated to high-quality education, and the success of our ELA pilot underscores the difference high quality instructional materials can make."

Successful Moves

Key moves that led to a successful pilot of ARC materials in Glen Lake Elementary include:

- Using the IRLA in every classroom so all teachers could try out a key component of the curriculum.
- Creating a culture of experimentation where school leadership and teachers learn together and meet regularly to address challenges and celebrate successes.
- Adjusting the master schedule to provide dedicated time for teachers to fully engage in the Professional Learning Community activities that are built into ARC Core.
- Maintaining focus on the students and using data from multiple sources to drive decisions.
- Trusting the design of the curriculum and the pilot process.