LPS



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Lawton Public Schools, Oklahoma

Turning Minutes into Milestones: Optimizing Waterford for High-Impact, Purposeful Screen Time

Lawton Public Schools serves a diverse community of 13,670 students in Southwest Oklahoma. With a vision to ensure every student graduates ready for what comes next, Lawton supports approximately 2,400 PreK–1st grade students across 19 elementary sites. Nearly 59% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Like many districts, Lawton navigates an operational reality: hiring over 80 new teachers each year, with more than 80% entering the classroom without traditional education degrees or early childhood backgrounds.

Student Population:

White: 32%

Hispanic or Latino: 24%

Black or African American: 20%

Two or More Races: 17%

American Indian or Alaska Native: 5%

Asian or Pacific Islander: 2%

The Challenge

Complex Tools, Heavy Teacher Lift, & Programs Not Designed for Young Learners

To give every child a strong start, Lawton needed an early learning tool that actually fit young students. Instead, they were using software built for older students and adapted down, making it frustrating and ineffective for PreK and kindergarten learners.

At the same time, classroom teachers were burdened with manual, one-on-one progress monitoring. Sitting down with each student individually took hours away from direct instruction. For non-traditionally certified teachers who were already learning how to manage a classroom, interpreting raw diagnostic data and planning small-group interventions created unnecessary burnout.

The Solution

Purposeful Tech & Daily Guardrails

In February, 2025, thanks to funding through the Oklahoma Horizon Digital Enhanced Campus, Lawton piloted Waterford Early Learning with 1,300 PreK students. After seeing immediate success, the district expanded to kindergarten in 2025–26 and 1st grade in 2026–27.

Lawton transformed its early learning strategy by focusing on four practical shifts:

1. **Age-Appropriate Design:** Rather than forcing young children onto modified upper-grade software, Lawton adopted Waterford Early Learning, built specifically for PreK through second grade, learning through songs, stories, and interactive instruction.
2. **Intentional Screen-Time Guardrails:** Lawton capped usage at a strict 15 minutes per day for reading and 15 minutes for math and science. The district removed extra computers from classrooms, replacing them with a simple set of 5 rotating iPads per room.
3. **Seamless Center Integration:** Waterford was built directly into the master schedule as part of center rotations and daily “WIN” (What I Need) intervention time.
4. **Automated Dashboards for Teachers:** Instead of manual testing, Waterford dashboards automatically group students by skill level and link directly to targeted instructional resources, giving new teachers clear, actionable next steps.

Student Growth & Strategic Impact



Lupe Ostruske, Director of Elementary Curriculum

"Waterford fills in a lot of the holes for phonics and phonemic awareness. Teachers need that information to do whole-group instruction well. And Waterford can also fill in the gaps that new teachers have. Everyone loves it. No one ever complains about it. That's unheard of!"

Waterford implementation has been associated with substantial gains in both kindergarten readiness and early literacy achievement across Lawton Public Schools.

Kindergarten Readiness Growth

- **Before Waterford (2023-24):** 67.2% of PreK students met kindergarten readiness benchmarks.
- **After 3 months of Waterford (2024-25):** Readiness increased to 79%, an 11.8 percentage-point gain.
- **After a full year of Waterford (2025-26):** Readiness increased from 58% at the beginning of the year to 80% at the end, a 22-percentage-point gain in a single school year.

In just one year of implementation, **four out of five PreK students met kindergarten-readiness benchmarks.**
(Kindergarten readiness measured using ESGI assessments.)

Early Literacy Growth (K-1)

- **Before Waterford (2024-2025):** 55.2% of students met benchmarks at the beginning of the year
- **After Waterford (2024-2025):** 72.1% met benchmarks at the end of the year.
- **A 16.9 percentage-point increase in K-1 literacy proficiency** following a full year of Waterford use.
- Nearly **three-quarters of K-1 students met benchmark expectations** by the end of the school year, up from just over half at the beginning of the year.

(Literacy growth measured using STAR Early Literacy assessments.)

Waterford Impact at a Glance

+37.9% improvement — **PreK Kindergarten Readiness**
58% → 80% over a full year of Waterford

+30.6% improvement — **K-1 Literacy Proficiency**
55.2% → 72.1% in one school year

Seamless Implementation

Teachers across all 19 sites embraced the transition to Waterford due to its ease of use and immediate classroom utility. Waterford has quickly been incorporated into classroom and school routines.

- **Streamlines Classroom Management:** Students navigate Waterford independently during center time, freeing educators to focus on targeted small-group teaching.
- **Drives PLC Collaboration:** Grade-level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) use real-time dashboard data to track student progress, adjust interventions, and target core skill growth.

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Discover what's possible in your district.

Request a demo and talk to our team.
waterford.org/waterford-early-learning-demo

Key Takeaways for District Leaders

"If you're on the fence, just try it. The research has been done. I don't like change and change is hard, but when I went into the classrooms, kids were engaged with Waterford. It really is where the student is at."

— Lupe Ostruske, Director of Elementary Curriculum

1. **Choose Tools Built for Early Learners:** Avoid software adapted down from upper grades and select programs built specifically for how young children learn.
2. **Set Firm Screen Time Limits:** Choose programs with proven instructional value. Protect instructional time and avoid screen fatigue by keeping usage short, focused, and goal-directed.
3. **Build Schedules That Work for Teachers:** Embed usage into existing classroom schedules and routines so technology supports—rather than disrupts—the classroom practices.
4. **Support New Teachers with Automated Data:** Use real-time reporting dashboards that auto-group students so teachers can spend time teaching instead of testing.
5. **Leverage Data in PLCs:** Structure PLC meetings around early literacy data to build stronger instructional leaders across every school site.