

# How one Pennsylvania elementary school used News-O-Matic to increase reading engagement and achievement

## ABOUT THE SCHOOL

### School

Executive Education Academy Charter School

### Location

Allentown, PA

### Student Population

1,500+ students in grades K-12

### Instructional challenge:

Embed current, relevant, and high-interest nonfiction into literacy instruction



## THE CHALLENGE

**Executive Education Academy Charter School was looking to engage students with high quality, current nonfiction reading.**

Executive Education Academy Charter School is a public charter school located in Allentown, PA, an urban area in the Lehigh Valley in eastern Pennsylvania. The school serves students in kindergarten through grade 12. It has an enrollment of 1,500+ students, with 93% belonging to minority groups and 100% qualifying for free and reduced lunch programs.

Administrators and teachers at the school were seeking ways to better engage their elementary students with nonfiction texts, with the goal of helping to increase reading proficiency levels by building and fostering in students a new appreciation for nonfiction content. They wanted to ensure the nonfiction content was current, relevant and of high-interest to students. It was also important that the content be high quality, written by reputable educators or journalists, as opposed to finding random articles on the internet.

Before using News-O-Matic, students showed little interest in reading nonfiction or news content. They were given a survey to see where their reading interests lie. The results showed that 60% of the students preferred to read fiction over nonfiction, while only 37% indicated that they read or listened to news or current events content.

## THE SOLUTION

School leaders chose to use News-O-Matic with their third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students. News-O-Matic is a digital learning platform used to engage students in grades K-8 with nonfiction, delivering five new original news articles each weekday. Schools across the country use News-O-Matic as a supplement to their core curriculum to improve reading and critical thinking skills and spark curiosity across subject areas, including English Language Arts (ELA), Science, and Social Studies.

**NEWS-O-MATIC SUCCESS STORY:  
EXECUTIVE EDUCATION ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL**

At Executive Education Academy Charter School, News-O-Matic was primarily used as a resource in the English Language Arts classroom block. Most of the teachers also used News-O-Matic as a choice during independent reading time - as morning work, free reading, or as an option for end-of-day reading. Teachers could assign specific articles they wanted students to read, and students could also choose to read about a topic that interested them, searching through News-O-Matic's extensive database of over 16,000 age-appropriate articles.

Interestingly, a third of the teachers also used News-O-Matic during designated science periods, taking advantage of the platform's robust science-related articles on topics such as space, animals, and other science topics. In addition, almost 20% of the teachers used News-O-Matic as a research tool to help students complete their classroom projects, which is a common way News-O-Matic is utilized in many school libraries.

**THE RESULTS**

**Teachers saw positive changes in their classroom with News-O-Matic.**

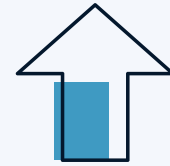
With News-O-Matic incorporated into their classroom, teachers started to see the following positive changes.

**1. Increase in reading enjoyment and other skills**

Teachers observed students experiencing increased reading enjoyment when accessing News-O-Matic articles. **Two-thirds of the teachers reported seeing a strong, noticeable difference in students' reading enjoyment of News-O-Matic versus other informational texts.**

Teachers also saw other benefits News-O-Matic brought to their students. They noticed **an improvement in critical thinking skills, as well as an increase in students' likelihood of engaging in discussions about the topics in the articles they were reading,** suggesting increased comprehension and enjoyment in reading.

Perhaps the benefit that came through most clearly was an increase in students' global awareness. **80% of teachers noted that their students displayed a more globally minded perspective after reading News-O-Matic.**



**With News-O-Matic, teachers saw an increase in their students':**

- reading enjoyment
- critical thinking skills
- willingness to discuss what they are reading
- global awareness

## 2. Growth in hours of time spent reading

News-O-Matic was implemented with students at the end of October 2023. Throughout the school year, both **students and teachers' reading of News-O-Matic articles consistently grew week over week**. By the end of May 2024,

- Third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students **read 10,905 articles, totaling 237 hours and 28 minutes of reading time.**
- Teachers read **596 articles with 19 hours and 44 minutes of reading time.**

## 3. Impact on reading proficiency

The school wanted to determine if News-O-Matic had any impact on student reading proficiency. Comparing STAR Reading Benchmark assessment scores at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year showed that reading proficiency did increase and given the steady growth of News-O-Matic usage, it suggests News-O-Matic was a contributing factor.

**Third- and fourth-grade students saw an almost 15% increase in the average % of students proficient or advanced, while fifth-grade students saw a close to 10% increase.**

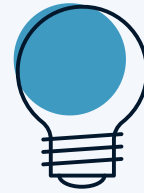
Looking specifically at **Nonfiction Reading Mastery Standards before and after News-O-Matic implementation, the growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year was approximately 10%**, when considering all grade levels collectively.

This growth suggests that reading News-O-Matic articles improves students' proficiency in various categories, including Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, and Range of Reading.

### THE CONCLUSION

The school was encouraged by the impact News-O-Matic had on the third, fourth, and fifth graders. News-O-Matic provides versatility for schools with many ways to expand the program to gain additional benefits across the curriculum.

**News-O-Matic is a digital learning platform that engages K-8 students with nonfiction reading through current events. Want to get started? Contact us at [info@newsomatic.org](mailto:info@newsomatic.org).**



**News-O-Matic improves student proficiency in these nonfiction reading areas:**

- Key Ideas & Details
- Craft & Structure
- Integration of Knowledge & Ideas
- Vocabulary Acquisition & Use
- Range of Reading