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How to Implement the Xello K–5 Program: Strategies for Teachers and Counselors

By Heather Hudson

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Introduction

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College and a career may seem like a distant goal for a first grader. To them, middle school feels like light years away! But experienced educators and counselors understand that the seeds of a student's adult success are sown when they're small.

Elementary school is an ideal time to seize the excitement and energy young students typically have for learning. This insight is why Xello developed a program tailored to Elementary students, designed to introduce age-appropriate career awareness, self-discovery, and future readiness skills.

> I feel [elementary] is a golden opportunity to work with kids to help them learn more about themselves through reflection activities, helping them identify what type of learner they are, and exposing them to as much as possible.
>
> Self-awareness is the first step. I start off by telling kids that they may not realize that what comes easily to them is actually what's going to lead them to their interests, goals, and possible careers in life.
>
> – Joelle Drader, Elementary School Counselor

But there's more.

Eight out of 10 elementary school students are engaged in school—but that number consistently drops as students transition to middle and high school, according to a Gallup poll of nearly 500,000 students.

According to the same Gallup poll, engaged students from K–12 are **4.5 times more likely** to be confident about their futures compared to those who are not engaged.

Participating in College and career readiness activities fulfills the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) **model of focus on academic, career, and social-emotional (SEL) development.**
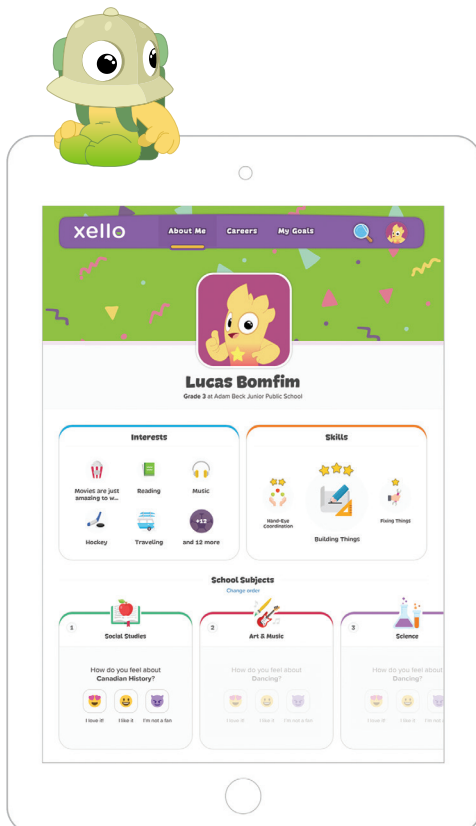
Why Xello K-5?

In a word: Fun. There's a reason that second graders in the Forest Hills School District cheer when it's time to log into Xello. They love to play Career Town, Xello's K-2 "mystery" game. It's so engaging that the students don't even notice they're taking in self-management and social skills, plus learning strategies they can put to work no matter what they're studying.
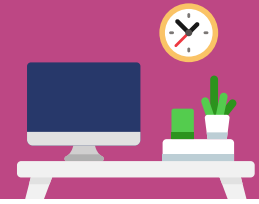
Read the case study:

How Forest Hills School District is Introducing Career Exploration to Elementary Students Using a Full K-12 Solution. Read More

# Obstacles to Overcome When Implementing Xello for Elementary

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Introducing a new software program can be daunting for a number of reasons:

Learning New Technology Can Feel Like a Huge Undertaking
It takes time and commitment for educators to integrate something new into their curriculum. And when that "something new" is an entirely unfamiliar program, the task can seem even more overwhelming.
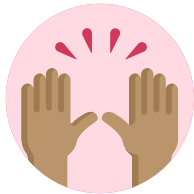
Educators Have to Be Motivated to Use It
Is there a mandate requirement in place? Is someone championing the rollout? Without a driving force or urgency behind the implementation of a program, motivation can fall at the wayside—it's only natural.

There's No Mandate for Elementary School Future Readiness
Educators must prioritize state curriculum requirements. In the absence of college and career readiness targets for younger students, it often falls to the bottom of the list.

Teachers Need to Be Trained to Use It
Staff meetings already jam packed. A school champion needs to take the lead to carve out time for teachers to get their hands on the program.

If rolling out a brand new program at your school or district seems like a daunting task, need not worry. This guide is designed to give you the tangible instructions you need to address each of these obstacles. What's more, you'll walk away with the confidence to successfully introduce Xello for Elementary in your classrooms. Let's get started.

# Are You Implementing Xello K-5 at Your School?

Are You Implementing Xello K-5 at Your School?

If you've hit a roadblock and need a hand rolling out the program to your youngest learners, look no further.

Whether you're an elementary school teacher or counselor, we're with you. In addition to our own Xello insights, we've picked the brains of experienced educators and school counselors **Kate McKenzie and Anthony Cook**. We've got actionable tips that will help both counselors and educators to roll out Xello K-5 in their schools right now.

Here's to successfully implementing the Xello K–5 program that your youngest students will love—and you will, too.
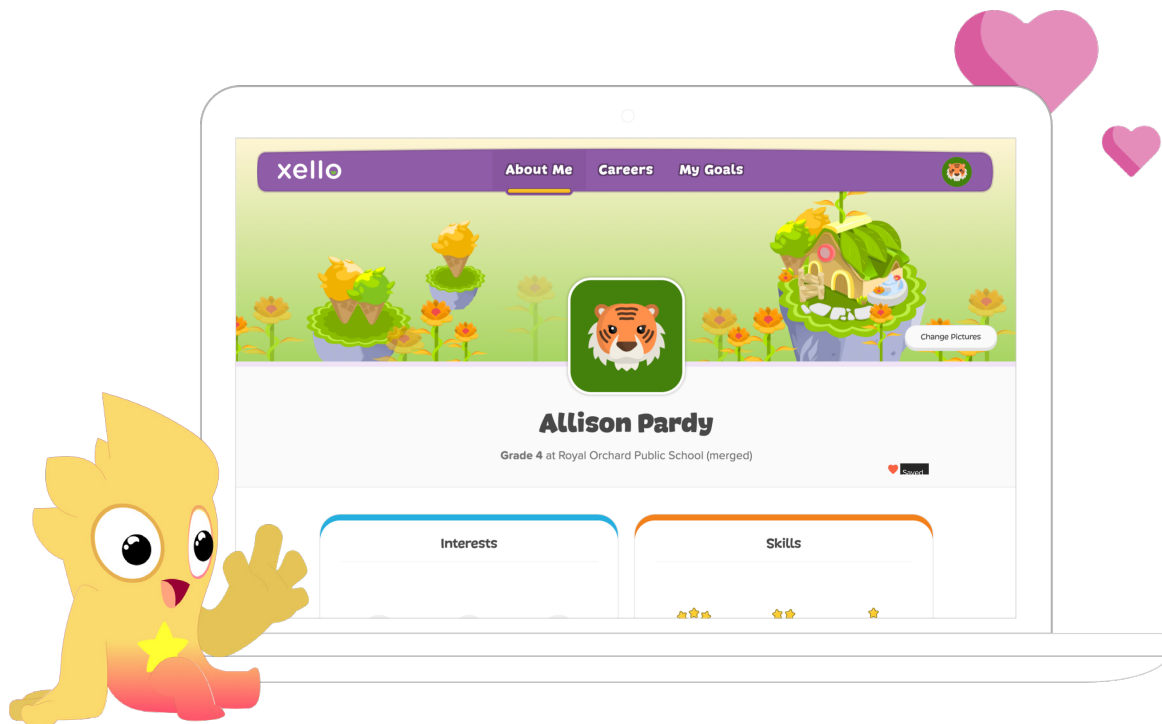
Xello Implementation Tips for K-5 Counselors

The name of the game is to rally teachers to truly understand the value of Xello. Once they see how easy it is to use, the unique way it contributes to academic and social-emotional learning (SEL) goals, and how much fun kids have with it, many teachers are happy to take over the responsibility of implementing it in their classrooms.

How to Help Roll Out Xello K-5 to Teachers

1 **Book time with teachers.**
This way, they can get familiar with Xello and see how intuitive it is to navigate. "We just need 30 minutes for teachers to play around with it to help make it a teacher-driven program and not necessarily a counselor-driven program because we want this to live in the classroom," said McKenzie.

2 **Prepare a "sales pitch."**
Show teachers the highlights of the program. Walk them through a demo account for their grade. Point out the lessons, activities, and other features. Show them how to make a class list, create assignments, and view progress. Take it slow to avoid overwhelming them with too much information.

3 **Do the first Xello lesson in the classroom yourself.**
Help teachers see the full value of the program by removing the pressure of preparing a brand new lesson. McKenzie takes care of showing students how to log in and teaches the first lesson so teachers can see how it works and support students as they work through it.

4 **Understand the unique connections teachers can make with students.**
McKenzie says the work kids do in Xello often gives teachers a fresh perspective on their students. "Johnny is no longer just the kid who's fidgety in math class. The [personality assessment] shows he's keen to be a helper." A tool that helps teachers understand what motivates individual students (and covers SEL and college and career readiness) is more than "just" a future readiness program.

5 **Remind teachers that kids are better with technology than many adults.**
If a teacher is especially tech-averse, show them that students will be able to navigate Xello in moments. The interface is designed for young minds and Gen Z kids are familiar with how to click to get what they want. Xello creates a single sign-on for most schools, so students can log in easily.

6   **Get creative with video.**
Make short screencast videos teachers can play for each age group to introduce them to Xello. (Bonus: Second graders don't need them because Xello provides an intro video.)

7   **Work with teachers to deliver lessons.**
McKenzie sends "reluctant" teachers her Calendly schedule and asks them to sign up for a time slot when she can come in and teach a Xello lesson. Often, they'll tell her what they're struggling with so she can address that in the Xello time.

8   **Demonstrate to teachers how Xello connects with the curriculum.**
For example, Cook demonstrates to the elementary educators in his school how the Career Town: Construction Xello lesson is tied to force and motion concepts they cover in science. "It's making the point that Xello can serve to enhance what they're doing already. It's not something more they have to do, and it helps create real world connections."

How to Make Xello Part of School Culture

Create school-wide challenges.
Pick a period of time for classes to "compete" against each other for getting the most Xello logins and usage times. Use announcements, posters, and bulletin boards to get the message out to students. Kids will hear it and want to participate. "It's almost like peer pressuring teachers to roll out Xello and it really works," said McKenzie.

Engage parents.
Send a letter home with every kid describing Xello. "I wanted to control a positive narrative about it. We shared that this program is one of the ways we can build strong resiliency skills," said McKenzie.

Set up a subcommittee for college and career readiness to help determine who "owns" it.
Then ensure that all staff has access and knows how to use Xello, including teachers, administrators, instructional supports, etc. It's a tool that can be leveraged in many ways by many educators.

Xello Implementation Tips for K-5 Teachers

For most elementary school educators, the school day whizzes by. Between academic lessons and behavior management, it's tough to get through everything you've planned. Instead of thinking of Xello as "one more thing" to cover in the classroom, our experts suggest using it as a way to enhance your regular activities. Here are some strategies tailored for the harried teacher.

Xello Implementation tips for K-5 Teachers

How to Roll Out Xello As a Teacher

1 **Employ Xello like a game.**
Some teachers use Xello time to ease into the week on Monday mornings, bring it in on a Friday afternoon, or have a lesson ready to go for when everybody needs a break from academics. Kids generally view it as a game, so it can be deployed as one.

2 **Use Xello to help teach SEL skills.**
More and more districts are acknowledging that SEL is an important component of being a successful student (and adult). Xello lessons help even the youngest learners develop skills such as:

- Time management
- Organization
- Regulating emotions
- Goal setting
- Collaboration
- Communication

Although there are lessons that directly teach some of these skills, McKenzie says they are implicit in many of the activities, making it more than "just" a college and career readiness tool.

3 **Use Xello to forge a connection with your students.**
It's difficult to truly get to know your students when you're focused on academics alone. Consider rolling out Xello lessons and activities early in the year as you're forming impressions of your students (and they're doing the same with you!) and revisit it regularly throughout the term. When you know what your students are passionate about, you can reach them in more personal ways. And when you share your interests and previous career aspirations, they can relate to you more meaningfully.

4 **Introduce Xello with enthusiasm.**
"One of the best pieces of advice I received as a teacher is, 'What you prioritize in your classroom is a signal to students of what's important to you,'" said McKenzie. Even if you're initially uncertain about integrating Xello, demonstrating that future readiness is important, even from a young age, will go a long way to ensuring their success later in life.

5 **Use Xello to augment both academic and life lessons.**
A 5th grade math teacher at McKenzie's school used the tool to teach students how to create a budget. Kids chose their dream job, used Xello to reference the annual salary, and then drew up a month's budget. "Some kids rejected some of their original career choices because they wouldn't make enough money for the kind of lifestyle they wanted. Others decided they really wanted to make [that career] work and wouldn't need to buy that many Twizzlers. It was fun to witness their thought process and a neat way to signal to kids that Xello is a great resource for them," said McKenzie.

6 **Are you a specialist teacher?**
Xello is for you, too. For instance, library and digital media specialists who cover digital citizenship could use Xello to demonstrate things like how to choose an avatar for any social media platform. Every student has access to the program so they can put their learnings into practice immediately and meaningfully.

7 **Plan for 30 to 45 minutes for the first lesson; 15 to 30 minutes for each subsequent lesson.**
Learning how to log-in and navigate around Xello takes a little time at first. But once they're familiar, most lessons fly by. McKenzie advises teachers to leave time for discussion. "The kid who doesn't want to share in math class because she's afraid of not knowing the answer will be the one to share results from their personality assessments. This is a great opportunity to promote self-confidence and student engagement that might not be available in other ways."

Xello Implementation tips for K-5 Teachers

8 **Encourage students to sign on from home.**

"Xello does a great job at onboarding parents. There are a lot of resources, videos, and even a one-pager that can be sent home," said McKenzie. There's no limit to the amount of exploration even young students can do in Xello. Suggest that they show their parents the games and their personality assessment (for older grades). This will help forge the home-school connection and kickstart college and career readiness discussions from an early age.
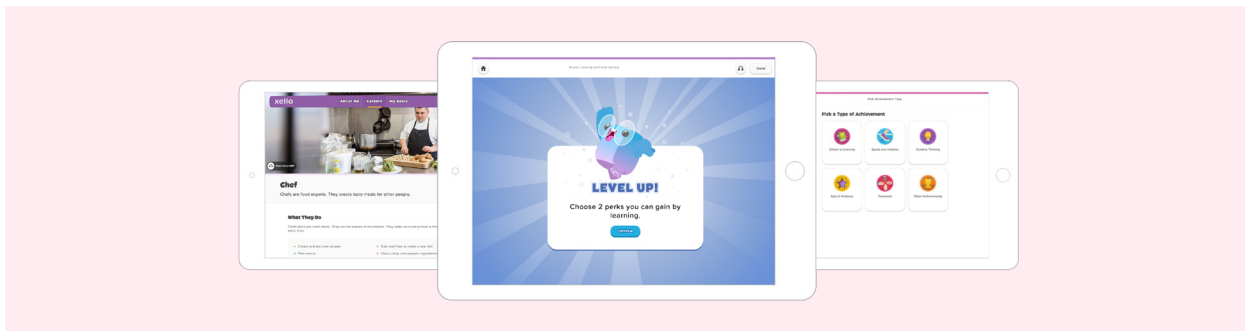
9 **Incorporate Xello into your "Choice Board" or "Interest Stations".**

Time to explore Xello is a great option for student-directed choice boards. They'll be learning valuable SEL skills, working on college and career readiness, and incorporating academic skills like reading comprehension.

10 **Use Xello to help set up students for success in an academic unit.**

"Xello fits nicely when it's done between units. For example, just before you start a unit you might say, 'We're going to take a lot of notes in this unit, so why don't we do a Xello lesson on organization that can help us organize them so we can be better learners?"

11 **Use Xello's supplemental activities.**

If your students are particularly enthusiastic about Xello lessons or you'd like to explore other ways to teach concepts 'belonging to a community (Grade 3)', 'trying your best (Grade 4)', or 'integrity (Grade 5)', review the number of supplemental activities. They require no preparation and work in tandem with Xello lessons.

12 **Keep Xello in your back pocket as a great activity for a substitute teacher to supervise.**

Once kids know how to log in, they can independently navigate the program. A Xello Lesson is ideal to supplement their learning in your absence.

Have more questions?
Xello has your back

Whether you're a counselor or a teacher, we hope these strategies have inspired and energized you to implement Xello K-5 into your school or classroom.

We're here to help you every step of the way. Our online Help section anticipates just about every scenario imaginable and offers clear instructions to guide you through. Additionally, your Xello Success Manager is also always available to support you.

Together, we can help the next generation understand how their strengths and interests fit into the world of work. After all, it'll come sooner than they think.
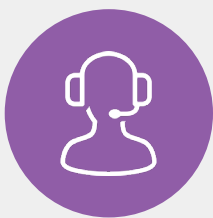
Visit **the Xello Support Center** to find answers to all your questions on Xello for Elementary.

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