

Cobb County School District Early Literacy Intervention

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Funding Sources:

Cobb County School District General Funds, collaborative local budget funds

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

Several departments pooled resources and budgets to produce bi-weekly assessments, professional learning opportunities, intervention resources, and support services.

Project Description:

This project served 12 Elementary schools in Cobb County, with high populations of struggling learners. Year 1 we started with 6 schools, Kindergarten only. Year 2 we expanded to 12 elementary schools including Kindergarten and 1st grade. Year 3 we will expand to Grade 2, into more schools, and possibly adding math intervention using the same model in 3rd grade.

Staffing Pattern:

District collaboration between:

- ELA Department
- Assessment & Personalized Learning
- Birth to K Specialist
- Special Student Services
- Leadership & Learning

Staffing in the local schools included:

- Kindergarten and 1st grade teachers
- Local school administration
- Literacy coaches in all participating schools

Population Served:

All students in Kindergarten at the selected Title 1 schools, regardless of their subgroup were involved. The second year, all students in kindergarten and 1st grade at the selected schools were included.

Project Origination:

Cobb County School District was at a time of materials acquisition when new textbook adoption for ELA in Primary grades was approaching. We knew we needed to implement resources to support phonics instruction in primary grades. However, knowing that a resource is not the answer to increased student performance, we knew we needed to research what was working in the field. A team of assistant superintendents, directors, supervisors and coaches traveled to Texas the summer before implementation to investigate a similar model. We came back and put our heads together on how this would work with our resources, our budget, and our schools.

Issues Addressed:

- Declining reading scores
- Lack of reading mastery by 3rd grade in our district
- Lack of phonics resources & development in the district for over ten years
- Immediate and ongoing accelerated intervention and remediation

- Para-pro accountability in Kindergarten

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

Increased foundational reading skills and increased reading fluency district-wide. Our goal was also to identify students needing early intervention and students with disabilities.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

- Early identification of struggling learners prevents dropout rates
- Reading fluency positively impacts all areas of education, including dropout rates
- Building relationships and mentoring through collaboration
- Early Literacy development with a systematic approach

Strategies and/or Interventions:

The strategy used for this project was two-week, structured direct instructional cycles followed by face to face individual common formative assessment. Embedded in the direct instruction for 20-30 minutes per day, 5 days a week was small group flexible grouping, ELL Support, SWD support, day-long reinforcements and Headsprout (Learning A-Z) digital intervention. The principals and leadership teams collaborated over the data twice per month and drilled down to student needs and intervention strategies for re-teaching and reinforcement.

Phonics Resources	Tier 1 Expected Usage	Tier 2 Expected Usage	Tier 3 Expected Usage
Benchmark Literacy: Start Up Phonics			
Benchmark Literacy: Build Up Phonics			
Headsprout	All students (45-60 min/week)	60 min./week + direct instruction in small group	60 minutes/week + individual and small group direct instruction
Reading A-Z	All students (60 min/week)		
Raz Kids	All students (60 min/week)		
Reading Resources	Tier 1 Expected Usage	Tier 2 Expected Usage	Tier 3 Expected Usage
The Next Step Forward in Guided Reading (Richardson)			
The Guided Reading Teacher's Companion, Flip Chart (Richardson)			
Scholastic Library			
iREAD (If school has purchased licenses)	All students (60 min/week)		
The Literacy Teacher's Playbook (Serravallo)			
Fountas & Pinnell Prompting Guide Part 1 for Oral Reading and Early Writing (Flip Chart)			
Fountas & Pinnell Prompting Guide Part 2 For Comprehension: Thinking, Talking, Writing (Flip Chart)			
DRA2 Progress Monitoring			
Rhyming Tubs			
Starfall			
Online Resources: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills http://www.readingresource.net/dibels.html			

Project Timeline:

Six schools, Kindergarten only: SY 2016-2017

Twelve schools Kindergarten and 1st grade: SY 2017-2018

TBD: SY 2018-2019 At least 12 schools expanding into 2nd grade

Special Conditions and/or Expertise Required to Carry Out the Project:

This project was a partnership between Assistant Superintendents, local schools, and Departments within the office of Teaching & Learning at the District Level including:

- Assessment
- Personalized Learning
- Instruction & Innovative Practice
- English Language Arts
- Learning Support Strategists for professional learning development
- Birth to Kindergarten Supervisor

- Special Student Services
- English Language Learner Support Specialist

Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:

Kindergarten Literacy Initiative	District Fluency Fall 2016	District Fluency Winter 2017	Percent Growth Fall to Winter SY2016-17		District Fluency Fall 2017	District Fluency Winter 2018	Average % Growth Fall to Winter SY2017-18
District	10.14	17.39	71%		12.22	19.89	63%
Cohort 2 Kinder Literacy Initiative							
Austell	6.48	15.21	135%		10.89	17.26	58%
Birney	6.6	13.47	104%		7.67	12.62	65%
Compton	5.67	10.14	79%		9.52	15.16	59%
Mableton	5.73	15.77	175%		12.12	16.1	33%
Milford	11.26	16.4	46%		9.05	15.98	77%
Powers Ferry	6.99	11.08	59%		5.26	8.86	68%
Average Growth	7.12	13.68	100%		9.085	14.33	60%
Cohort 1 Kinder Literacy Initiative							
	Fall 2016	Winter 2017					
Belmont Hills	4.42	12.64	186%		9.42	13.72	46%
Fair Oaks	10.59	17.86	69%		8.89	15.12	70%
Green Acres	4.96	12.44	151%		4.2	10.81	157%
Norton Park	8.51	14.37	69%		13.7	17.36	27%
Riverside Primary	8.73	14.54	67%		11.19	14.42	29%
Smyrna	8.55	17.41	104%		11.66	19.44	67%
Average Growth	7.63	14.88	107%		9.84	15.15	66%

Current Status of Project:

The project is currently being implemented in 12 schools and planning is ongoing to expand this initiative not only to 2nd grade, including more schools, but in 3rd grade math as well.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

As the Supervisor of Personalized Learning, my role was to help schools identify the struggling learners with data, provide intervention resources to teachers for small group instruction, walk through classrooms to support struggling teachers with struggling students, professional development, and principal data call collaboration and participation.

Lessons Learned:

Lessons learned were many. We mainly learned how important formative assessment is to the process of early identification of struggling learners. If it wasn't for looking at the data to identify students and teachers who were struggling with mastery of the standards, we would be practicing a "wait to fail" model instead of the ongoing accelerated intervention for all subgroups of students. We are able to involve the para-pro in Kindergarten as an instructional leader, we are practicing professional learning communities with fidelity, and we are sharing ownership of our students and working together to meet the goals on "One Team One Goal, Student Success.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

Common Formative Assessment is key. Collaboration among stakeholders. Insure a strong RTI program with supports from ESOL and SWD.