

## **Early Literacy Update September 2023**

In order to support MVWSD's Strategic Plan goal of providing effective and consistent instructional practices that meet the needs of all students, our district has created an early literacy team.

Third grade marks the shift of learning to read to reading to learn, meaning that reading shifts from a focus on decoding words and making sense of words on a page to reading as a tool for learning new information. Therefore, it is critical that students are reading at grade level by the time they reach third grade.

In Spring 2023, only 67% of our district's second graders were reading at grade level (Tier 1), according to iReady Reading diagnostic 3. Digging deeper, 14% of our second graders ended the year reading at the Kindergarten level (Tier 3). Proficiency rates were lowest at Castro, Monta Loma, Mistral, and Theuerkauf.

In response to the data, MVWSD placed an increased focus on supporting early literacy through the formation of an early literacy team. In addition to a Director of Early Literacy, the team includes 5 reading intervention (RI) teachers and 5 instructional assistants (IA). The RI teachers and IAs are supporting early learners in grades K-2 at Castro, Mistral, Monta Loma, and Theuerkauf through push in and pull out reading intervention groups.

### **Work to Date**

Over the summer, the Director and the RI teachers attended a 30 hour Institute for Multi-Sensory Education Orton Gillingham (IMSE OG) training. OG is an evidence based, structured, multisensory approach to foundational skills instruction. IMSE is a leading provider of OG training and systematic intervention materials. Instructional assistants received training in multisensory strategies, phonological awareness, and phonics development. Ongoing professional development will be provided through a 6 hour follow up IMSE OG training, PD sessions, and coaching.

The early literacy team's approach to intervention is to provide data-driven tiered support following our district's Universal Data Cycle calendar as part of our Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). This means that groups are formed based on several data sources including iReady, reading difficulty screeners, and other early literacy assessments. Each intervention cycle lasts for 9 weeks. Students' progress is monitored throughout the cycle. At the end of each cycle, students are given a post-assessment to determine continued need for or exit from reading intervention. New students may be added into subsequent intervention cycles through the Universal Data Cycle and Coordination of Services Team (COST) processes within MTSS.

Reading Intervention happens through both pull out and push in intervention. RI teachers and IAs pull out intervention groups four times a week, scheduled during Response to Instruction (RTI) and English Language Arts small group instruction time. The scheduling is intentional so that students receiving reading intervention do not miss first instruction during core instruction.

IAs push into classrooms weekly for additional support. The first 9 week cycle for Kindergarten will consist of the RI teachers and IAs pushing into the classroom to help provide great quality first instruction in literacy. Kindergarteners will begin pull out support in cycle 2.

Reading intervention lessons follow a systematic, multi-sensory approach for teaching, reteaching, practicing, and reinforcing foundational skills. The weekly lesson plan includes lessons and practice in phonemic awareness, explicit teaching of new phonetic concepts, systematic review of learning phonetic concepts, red words (non-phonetic words), and application of phonetic concepts through dictation and decodable readers.

In August, the RI teachers and IAs pre-assessed 249 first and second graders at Castro, Mistral, Monta Loma, and Theuerkauf. Students were selected for pre-assessment based on their iReady Reading Diagnostic 1 scores and reading difficulty screeners, and then were pre-assessed using IMSE OG assessments to pinpoint specific strengths and areas of need. Based on those pre-assessments, the RI teachers and IAs will provide reading intervention support to 150 students. The remaining students will continue to receive reading support from their classroom teachers through RTI and small group instruction. Pre-assessment data has been shared with classroom teachers so that they can further pinpoint their RTI and small group instruction. For example, the students not receiving intervention from the RI teacher will still receive intervention during the same scheduled blocks from the classroom teacher using evidence-based reading intervention materials (SPIRE and Sound Sensible).

### **Considerations**

The early literacy team was formed to address the foundational skills needs of our most underperforming schools. The RI teachers and IAs will not be able to serve every student reading below grade level, nor will they be able to support every school site. Each school will need to continue providing other evidence-based early literacy interventions in grades K-2 and reading support for grades 3-8.

### **Next Steps**

The early literacy team began the first intervention cycle on August 28th. The team will monitor progress throughout the cycle and regroup and shuffle students prior to the second intervention cycle, beginning October 16th. The team will collaborate with sites through weekly collaboration and the MTSS process. The Board will receive an update on early literacy at the January 25th board meeting.