



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 20, 2022

Contact: Aimee Gordon
Director of Communications
253.358.6931
gordona@psd401.net

PSD K-3 students excel in reading and literacy after pandemic

Gig Harbor, WA – While there has been much discussion around the nation about learning loss from remote and hybrid learning, the Peninsula School District is seeing a different story in our elementary literacy program.

PSD uses the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) oral reading assessment, developed by researchers at the University of Oregon to evaluate our K-2 students and their literacy abilities. PSD has used DIBELS since 2018. Besides meeting Washington State's requirements to screen students in grades K-2 for indications of below-grade level literacy development, it gives valuable information to K-5 teachers about a student's reading strengths and needs. This May, PSD saw 69% of students are reaching or exceeding grade level expectations, up from 63% in the spring of 2019.

In addition to DIBELS, reading growth at each PSD elementary school met or exceeded pre-COVID national norms as measured on i-Ready, a benchmark literacy assessment. The i-Ready tool is a computer-based assessment that includes comprehension and vocabulary in addition to early literacy skills.

Growth is an important metric to track and celebrate, as it shows how well instruction is working for students and informs interventions and other supports to promote learning. At Artondale and Vaughn elementary schools, the median growth for 3rd grade students was 200% of typical growth targets, with many other grade level teams at schools close behind them.

These successes come in the context of PSD's ongoing work to enhance its system of support for early literacy. Throughout the 2021-2022 school year, Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade teachers implemented a set of strategies called Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI). ECRI instruction is focused on the foundations of reading;

- phonological and phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- and fluently reading text.

In August 2021, K-2 teachers began ECRI training. ECRI only takes 30 minutes of instruction time a day, and may seem like a basic back-and-forth between teachers and students to classroom visitors, but is actually an evidence-based method developed by researchers at Oregon State University.



“It’s reading instruction strategies that we use with our current Reading Wonders district adopted program,” Instructional Facilitator Kelly Pruitt said. “So it’s not a whole new set of books, it’s not a whole new curriculum. It’s teachers using what we have now but with enhanced routines based on the science of reading. It makes it more explicit, more systematic, and kids have more opportunities to respond.”

Step into Tatem Mitchell’s kindergarten classroom at Pioneer Elementary and you’ll see a group of kids excited to try their hand at spelling. Mitchell spends time using dictation to help the students sound out and spell new words, and then they are challenged to write the word on their whiteboards. Once they finish their challenge word they get a chance to see what other words they can make by changing just one or two letters. Box becomes Bob or fox, jug becomes tug.

“I like it because it makes me know more words,” one of Mitchell’s students told her during class.

“So our whole kindergarten team loves ECRI,” Mitchell said. “Especially the sound blending and the letter sound cards ... for learning letter names and letter sounds. The ECRI routines are so consistent throughout the year, so [students] don’t have to learn a new routine once they know [ECRI]. It really has helped us see a lot more growth this year with some of those district benchmarks related to phonemic awareness.”

Thanks to the immense work of teachers, staff and administrators, and the effort put in by students, our early learners are set up for success after 3rd grade.

###