

Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8 establishes expectations for literacy instruction on the foundation of scientific, evidence-based reading research and practices. With effective instruction, all D8 students will become proficient readers demonstrating both word recognition skills as well as strong language comprehension abilities which result in effective reading comprehension for learning. Students will demonstrate and solidify learning through collaborative conversations and analytical and process writing experiences.

What this Means for Instruction:

Effective literacy instruction is explicit and systematic. It is comprised of whole group, small group, and individualized instruction informed by ongoing formative assessment of basic early literacy skills and student response to literacy instruction. As students are developing basic early literacy skills (typically in K-2nd grades), instruction for all students includes phonological and phonemic awareness, basic and advanced phonics, vocabulary, comprehension (starting with listening comprehension and expanding to reading comprehension as appropriate), and fluency (accuracy, expression and rate when basic decoding skills have been acquired). This instruction targets foundational or “learning to read” skills; language, vocabulary and concepts are developed primarily through listening and speaking standards. As students’ independent decoding skills improve, instruction shifts to incorporate greater focus on independent reading comprehension, vocabulary, consistent integration of writing opportunities (to further synthesize comprehension and critical thinking), and overall “reading to learn.” This shift in instructional emphasis typically occurs in 2nd or 3rd grade; however, many students will continue to require explicit and systematic word recognition instruction throughout the intermediate grades in order to become independent readers.

Instructional decision-making must be driven by student performance and need as identified through ongoing formative assessment. Students who are learning to read must receive explicit and systematic instruction in phonological/phonemic awareness and phonics, and this instruction must be based upon the identified student strengths and needs. They must also receive explicit and systematic instruction in vocabulary and concept development through the reading and listening/speaking standards. To maximize every instructional minute, teachers must carefully evaluate which skills their students need as well as the best method for delivering this instruction – whole group, small group, or one-on-one. In classrooms where there are diverse student performance levels in basic early literacy skills, teachers are encouraged to use small group instruction to target and address specific differentiation needs. In these situations, whole group instruction, through shared reading and writing, can provide an effective vehicle to build language, vocabulary, conceptual understanding and comprehension skills. This intentional and multi-faceted approach ensures all students receive grade-level instruction/content AND the explicit, systematic intervention they need to become proficient readers.