



Bethlehem Area SD Secondary Literacy

The Bethlehem Area School District's vision is "to eliminate race and family income as predictors of school success by guaranteeing equitable access to opportunities for learning and growth" (Bethlehem Area School District, 2024, p. 4). One of the primary ways we will make that vision a reality is by ensuring that all children learn how to read and comprehend text. In the 2014-2015 school year, one of our 16 elementary schools, Lincoln Elementary, was in Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI). As part of their improvement plan for the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), they shifted their reading instruction from Balanced Literacy to a scientifically-based approach. Their success at improving outcomes for students provided the proof of concept, and the district expanded training and coaching in the science of reading and evidence-based instruction and assessment to all elementary schools. We first began by training our principals and supervisors in the academic topics just mentioned and in change management. We then trained kindergarten teachers and specialists, then grade 1 teachers, and so on, until all administrators and K-3 teachers and specialists were trained in the science and implementing evidence-based practices.

While our work was ongoing to ensure our youngest students receive a strong foundation, we knew that we needed to have a plan for our students in grades 4 through 12. In the spring of 2019, one of our four middle schools, Broughal Middle School, was identified as a CSI school. That designation provided us with the opportunity to use Broghal as a proof of concept at the middle level. Over the course of the 2019-2020 school year, Broughal teachers participated in intensive, targeted professional learning focused on Multi-Systems of Tiered Support (MTSS) at the secondary level and content area literacy. With the help of a consultant, teachers learned about MTSS, and they implemented a universal screener for reading, learning

how to administer the assessment and interpret the data. Since the district was already using Acadience Reading K-6 (Good & Kaminski, 2018) at the elementary level, this was adopted for grade 6, and Acadience Reading 7-8 (Abbott et al., 2020) was adopted for grades 7 and 8. Teachers also learned how to administer the Acadience Reading Survey (Powell-Smith et al., 2021), an informal diagnostic. The school already had a dedicated intervention and enrichment (I/E) period, and teachers learned how to use the data to more precisely group students for intervention.

While the intervention period was for reading and math, if a student needed support in both, we triaged reading deficits as the higher priority for getting intervention. Students with reading deficits were placed in either Lexia PowerUp (Lexia Learning, 2021) or REWARDS (Archer et al., 2014), both taught by classroom teachers during the I/E period, and students who were reading below the third grade level received small group targeted intervention from reading specialists or special education teachers. Teachers preserved one team meeting in every six-day cycle to talk about student data. *All* content teachers were part of the data discussions, and some of the best reading interventionists were from departments other than English Language Arts. But the learning wasn't just for teachers. Students were taught about the assessments and what their individual data meant. They tracked their growth throughout the year using progress monitoring and benchmark data.

In addition to learning about using data and reading interventions, all teachers of English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, Special Education, and English Language Learners (ELLs) participated in The Key Comprehension Routine (Sedita, 2015) and The Key Vocabulary Routine (Sedita, 2013) training from Keys to Literacy. When schools shut down in March 2020 just after the final Key Vocabulary Routine training, teachers Zoomed in from home to participate in collaborative coaching conversations. When schools reopened on a hybrid schedule in the fall, teachers continued using the comprehension and vocabulary routines with their students. Classroom walkthroughs revealed all teachers using the same routines, providing

consistency for students and support to help them access complex text. Once again, we had proof of concept.

Just as we did at the elementary level, we began our district-wide secondary implementation by training our middle and high school principals and supervisors on the science of reading, MTSS, adolescent literacy, and change management. We expanded the use of the universal screen to all middle schools, and we have been building assessment literacy in stages. All middle schools now have an I/E period, and teachers are providing targeted interventions to students. We are in year 3 of a multi-year training plan for all English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science teachers in grades 4-12, and all Special Education, and ELL teachers in grades 6-12 to be trained in The Key Comprehension Routine (Sedita, 2015), The Key Vocabulary Routine (Sedita, 2013), and Keys to Content Writing (Sedita, 2024) from Keys to Literacy. As we strengthen our core instruction, we continue to expand our MTSS efforts at the secondary level. All of our secondary principals provide State of the Building reports three times per year to their colleagues and district leadership. We are continually learning with and from one another.

Broughal continues to lead the way. While students may need more than a year's time to close gaps, they are making progress. Our district's implementation of Leader in Me (Covey et al., 2014) has strengthened our work around student goal setting, and more students are maintaining their benchmark status from beginning to end of year. At the end of the 2023-2024 school year, 93% of sixth-grade students who started the year At or Above Benchmark on the universal screener were still At or Above Benchmark at the end of the year. In seventh grade, 85% of students who started the year At Benchmark were still At Benchmark at the end of the year. Importantly, over 70% of the school's Special Education and ELL students made growth in their reading scores. At Broughal, when students grow, teachers and students celebrate through individual conversations, class celebrations, and school-wide assemblies. Since Keys to Literacy is now a district-wide initiative, we have included all new and veteran Broughal teachers

in our professional development, and they always bring valuable insights and experience to the conversations. The rest of our secondary schools continue to grow in their capacity to use data and implement evidence-based literacy practices, and we are on our way to improving outcomes for all students.

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