

Dear Chairperson Riester, Superintendent Jaszczak, and Members of the School Board,

This year, we started with language goals to focus teachers on specific literacy skills being taught in their classrooms. At times, it has been difficult for all of our teachers to see the connection to their content or why it is important for all of us to have students use literacy in all of our classes. Through professional development, emails, and individual interactions, I believe we have more teachers who see the importance of using literacy skills during instruction to continue to build our students' reading skills. Teachers generally want to do things correctly, so developing meaningful language goals takes time - time that teachers often don't have because of the busyness of their schedules and the number of different preps we all teach. As a result, Bethany and I made many attempts to provide scaffolds and examples to help with this task. Artificial intelligence (AI) has also been extremely helpful.

My own observations have been that language goals provide students with a concrete understanding of what they are going to be learning in class each day. Covid created so many gaps in unexpected places for our students, and this simple goal allows them to know what they need to be able to do during that hour related to learning and literacy.

I know we are in a difficult financial situation, but instructional coaching can be a very valuable tool for districts to make faster progress with teachers implementing new skills. There is so much research around the effectiveness they can have, and I hope you will explore this in the future for more than just one hour per day. This year, I only had one period a day to devote to Instructional coaching. That was not nearly enough time to have the impact I had hoped for, but it was a beginning. I believe teachers began to trust that Bethany and I were there to provide useful feedback without any negative consequences. They have started to ask really deep and insightful questions of me regarding their teaching practice.

Literacy needs to remain a priority in this district. Out of the students receiving special ed that I am working with, there are a few 10th graders that are still struggling to read 3-5th grade materials. Knowing the science of reading has been beneficial in helping them to make progress. But, I also noticed in the two 9th grade LA classes I am teaching, about 50% of those students struggle with multisyllabic pronunciations of unfamiliar words. When you can't decode the words on the page, it makes comprehension very difficult. So, my wish would be that Red Wing Schools continue to provide professional development in the area of literacy. LETRS training next year will help with the teacher's basic understanding of how reading is learned, but at the high school level, more work is required to put that information into practice within all content areas. Instructional coaching would be a wonderful way to do that.

Overall, in my role as a literacy coach/instructional coach, I have seen some movement in teachers being more collaborative and wanting to know strategies that will help their students be successful. Language goals were just the starting point to help teachers create a specific focus each day, but much more work is needed to support literacy.

Sincerely,
Stacy Schultz