

Improving Adolescent Literacy at Parkrose Middle School



Presented by
Stacey Figgins,
Literacy Coach
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Essential Questions for this Presentation

What has been accomplished and implemented in literacy at the middle school after almost five months of having a full-time literacy coach?

How does research support the work in literacy that is being done at the middle school?



Background Information

- Improving adolescent literacy is a national issue and focus
- Trends in reading proficiency show a general decline in reading scores after 5th grade
- Even high school students with average reading ability are underprepared for literacy demands after high school

•Reading skills impact all content areas

	SCIENCE	MATH
Not prepared in reading	1%	15%
Prepared in reading	32%	67%

•(ACT, The Forgotten Middle, 2008)

Research Focus: United States Department of Education– What Works Clearinghouse

•Extensive Research Review to identify best practices in Adolescent Literacy

•Findings not shocking to the literacy community, but the value of having rigorous research and data to support improvement work is essential

•5 Basic Findings to review and discuss as they relate to Parkrose Middle School

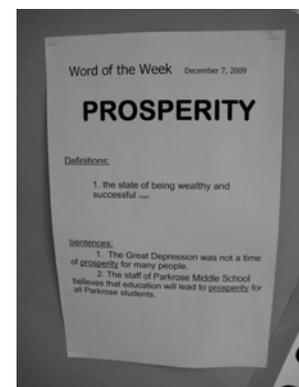
Recommendation #1: Provide explicit vocabulary instruction.

Why is it needed?

- More uncommon content-specific vocabulary, jargon and discipline-related concepts as students progress through grade levels
- Research has shown that integrating explicit vocabulary instruction into content areas aids students in learning textbook vocabulary
- Probability of learning new words incidentally from context is only about 15%
- Repeated exposure in multiple contexts and domains

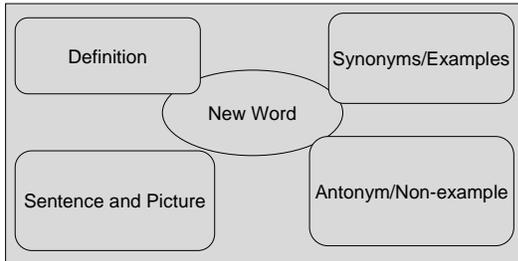
Where We Are

- 50% PMS teachers self-reported teaching vocabulary explicitly 15 times or more during a given school year
- Two distinct focus areas: direct instruction in word meaning and strategies to promote independent vocabulary development
- Word of the Week



Where We Are

Use of graphic organizers to explicitly teach vocabulary is common and a growing practice



Where We Are



- SLOP trainings focus on strategies for ELL and all students
- Sixth grade LA unit on word parts and Latin/Greek roots
- Two coaching meetings so far this year focused on vocabulary
- Several PMS teachers use some sort of word wall

Where We Are

Other successful vocabulary strategies in use



8th LA open word sort

7th science closed word sort

Where We Are Going

- Continue Word of the Week
- Identify teachers who could use additional support and continue coaching work
- Systematically organizing follow up work in word parts in seventh and eighth grade
- Continued data collection at next staff meeting
- Continued professional development with follow up coaching
- Comparable schools survey and data

Recommendation #2: Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategies.

Why is it needed?

- Adolescent difficulty in comprehending content-area textbooks
- Clear research about increasing reading skills by teaching multiple comprehension skills vs. "business as usual"
- Reading comprehension success is essential for overall success in a democracy

Where We Are

- 58% of staff self reported teaching comprehension skills 15 times or more per year
- 55% of staff self reported allowing students to read at their own reading level 15 or more times per year
- 6th grade PLC goal on comprehending informational text
- Collaboration work with eighth grade language arts team on differentiated short story unit

Where We Are

Examples of the types of comprehension lesson currently in use



6th grade language arts



8th grade language arts



Where We Are



- District staff development on comprehension
- AVID skills like questioning and note taking have direct connection to comprehension work
- Collaboration work with seventh grade science team on comprehension work

Where We Are Going

- Continued coaching and professional development in comprehension strategies
- Explicitly connect AVID strategies and comprehension strategies for teachers
- Continued work with teachers and administration to increase variety in text availability
- More PLC group work in comprehension with literacy coach as resource
- Continued data collection at next staff meeting
- Investigate option of grade-level focus on different strategies
- Comparable schools survey and data

Recommendation #3: Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation.

Why is it important?

- Movement toward deepest levels of comprehension like drawing conclusions, evaluation, and interpretation
- High quality discussions allow internalization of thinking process
- Intertwined with comprehension work and vocabulary strategies
- Discussion-based classrooms produce higher literacy growth

Where We Are

- School wide use of class discussion of text in small and large groups
- District professional development on Bloom's Taxonomy and Costa's levels of questioning



Where We Are Going

- Professional development and coaching work on discussion protocols
- Continued development of AVID questioning strategies and their connection to effective discussion
- Collect more data about time devoted to discussion and the quality of discussion
- Comparable schools survey and data

Recommendation #4: Increase Student Motivation and Engagement in Literacy Learning

Why is it important?

- "There is little difference between a person who doesn't read and a person who cannot read." Mark Twain
- General decline in students' motivation to read school-related text as students progress in grade levels– even more pronounced with struggling readers
- Speculated connection to drop out rates

Where We Are

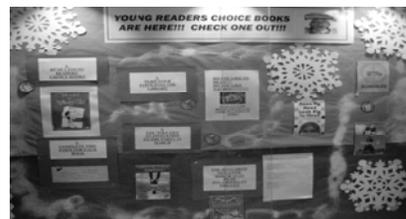
- New walk through observation protocol increasing emphasis on explicit learning goals
- Widespread use of individual choice for reading selections
- Common use of lessons and materials that are relevant to teens' lives and interests
- Word of the Week contests
- Books 2 U
- Imprint Program

Where We Are

All LA teachers have an in-class library with high interest texts available to students.



Where We Are



Young Readers' Choice

Collaboration between literacy coach and library staff



Where We Are Going

- More data on teachers' ability to peak student interest and build connections to their lives
- More data about teachers' use of goal-setting, self-directed learning, and collaborative learning
- Professional development and coaching with staff about building positive classroom environments that promote autonomy
- Increase participation in Young Readers' Choice
- Continued collaboration with library staff and literacy coach
- Continued support helping teachers find texts and create lessons to engage students
- Comparable schools survey and data

Recommendation #5 Make available individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by qualified specialists.

Why is it needed?

- Some adolescents need support beyond regular classroom setting to increase literacy skills
- In recent history, approximately 20-40% of PMS students do not meet benchmarks in reading yearly
- Research on students with decoding challenges supported intervention work in this area
- Other struggling readers need intensive support in comprehension skills

Where We Are

Language!

Reading Intervention Classes



Where We Are



Writing Intervention Classes

Where We Are



In-class intervention:
RAZ Kids

Where We Are Going

- Continued investigation into intervention programs currently being tested and researched like Reading Apprentice and Xtreme Reading
- Focus on incorporating more in-class intervention systems
- Continued work on procedures for identifying student needs and progress monitoring
- Open doors to Language! beyond SPED
- Continued data reflection of current intervention programs in place and modification where needed
- Comparable schools survey and data

Concluding Thoughts

- Acknowledgement of current successes including the creation of the literacy coach position

- The importance of newly available research

- Clear goals and focus areas for the future

