

Administration Reports

October 2014

Focus for October – Interventions for writing during the school day.

AC Houghton Elementary

Kindergarten Writing Interventions

As a district we are focusing on *letter sounds*, so association with writing letters and recognizing their sounds is also an important skill. With the new Journeys curriculum we are working on letters daily in LA then reinforcing those skills during our writing blocks.

ACH's Kindergarten teacher's primary interventions at this point in the school year are mainly to remediate behavior problems, focus on the importance of learning school rules, and to help build valuable social skills.

After preliminary academic testing our new kindergarten students, teachers can easily identify those that are struggling with academics. Even in the first few weeks of school children are already identified and placed on a watch list in the areas of speaking, reading, writing, and math. During our daily intervention time the kinder group works one-on-one with students in one, or sometimes all, of these aspects of learning. Often times finishing work that is incomplete is not only due to not understanding, or getting distracted in a whole group setting, it is frequently due to lack of knowing how to organize materials to complete a project.

Intervention time is used to guide our young learners with questioning and help with skills a child is struggling with. This time is well spent as teachers learn first-hand a lot about how a student is learning, or in most cases why they are not learning. The biggest obstacle for children at this age in the area of writing seems simple, but causes a lot of difficulty, and that skill is mastering proper **pencil grasp**. Not only is it valuable now, but is a skill they will use the rest of their lives! We have various tools and tricks to help students master proper pencil grasp so their hands don't fatigue and also to enable them to write legibly. With one-on-one time we can identify students who need a different writing utensil to become successful writers. Examples of tools used to remediate struggling students include oversized pencils, triangular pencils, and even in some cases 'half' pencils. Half pencils are helpful with students who have little or no muscle tone as they have less pencil to manage. We also use various styles of crayons with these students to help with fine motor skills. Coloring, cutting, and directed play with manipulatives, are all strategies primary teachers use to build the muscles in little hands.

Another quick and effective intervention for writing, used during instructional time with young struggling writers, is the use of a highlighter. The student can watch the teacher write the desired skill properly and then the student can easily trace to help be successful and practice writing letters or numbers properly and legibly. ACH kindergarten teachers are excited about having this time in our schedule daily to be able to spend time with kids that would otherwise get frustrated and often give up!

Heppner Elementary & Heppner Jr/Sr High School

It is hard to believe that October is already upon us, but the recent cold mornings are a sure sign that fall has arrived. Our enrollment is currently 187 students at HES and 168 at HHS. We enjoyed our Open House and Back to School Night on the evening of Tuesday, September 30th and based on comments from our students and parents during the evening, it was a success.

The HES Student Council elections were also recently held and I am happy to report that all of the students who were running for positions ran clean campaigns and gave outstanding speeches. The HES student council members for the 2014/2015 school year are; President- **Madelyn Nichols**, Vice President- **Kaden Combe**, Secretary- **Marlee Mitchell**, Treasurer- **Cody Fletcher**, Publicity Director- **Derrick Smith** and Fourth Grade Representative- **Trevor Nichols**

This month's board report will focus on interventions in place with emphasis on writing support during the school day. At both HES and HHS we use the Three Tier Pyramid Response to Intervention as a decision making tool designed to allow for early and effective responses to our student's learning and behavioral difficulties, while providing them with a level of instructional support matched to their level of need using teacher data and assessment results for evaluating the effectiveness of our instructional practices. RtI (which has been a district priority the past couple of years) relies on evidence-based instructional practices and frequent progress monitoring to provide the assessment data necessary to make decisions about student progress and the need (if any) for more additional support and intervention. These steps are also known as (Tier 2-supplemental support) and (Tier 3-intensive interventions). The pyramid model is intended to reduce unnecessary referrals to special education by ensuring that all children in the general education setting (Tier 1) have access to high quality curriculum and instruction that are taught with fidelity, and that each student receives a level of instruction matched to their level of need.

Tier 1 Core Program components that are currently in place at HES to help ensure that all students are meeting the mark in regards to MCSD-Goal #3 include; Journey's (with ability grouping), HEROES Reading Program, Saxon Math, IXL Math, Easy CBM, educational assistant support/help in the classroom, parent volunteer help/support in the classroom, HHS TA help/support in the classroom(s), and study halls at HHS to name a few.

Tier 2 Supplemental Program components include; Success Maker, Read Naturally, Bal-A-Vis-X, Bring Up Grades (BUG), Benchmark Boost, COLT Tracks, and C.O.L.T. Intervention Time.

Tier 3 Intensive Program components include; Special Education, one on one specialized instruction, Intervention Support, and Success Maker.

We also offer many other intervention strategies in the classroom. All teachers create differentiated group configurations to meet student needs. Students may work in small groups or work one-on-one with parent helpers, educational assistants or the classroom teacher to review concepts. Colt Tracks are used school-wide in the HES classrooms as a behavior intervention. The Colt Tracks help track student behavior and serve as a communication tool with parents daily. Bal-a-Vis-X is utilized as an intervention to help with motor planning, among other things. Success Maker is also used as an intervention at every grade level to boost student achievement in writing, reading and math. Classrooms also have *Step up to Writing* to improve student achievement in writing at all grade levels again this school year at HES. *Step up to Writing* was purchased as a curricular strategy to help bring a better school wide focus to the writing process at HES across all grade levels.

Classroom teachers draw from their backgrounds and from their own materials to offer interventions in their classrooms on a daily basis. Teachers work with each other to target student learning styles and to maximize student achievement in the classroom.

Other writing and non-writing interventions and strategies being used in Heppner High School classrooms again this year include the following;

- Scheduling students who have not met state standards into extension classes.

Extension classes are a way to provide additional time and writing instruction in the critical areas of language arts and math.

- Capturing student time with teacher instruction before school, after school and tutorial. Communication with parents on each and every case to provide additional time and guidance.
- Friday morning concentrated work with a focus on writing.
- Study groups with coaches and teachers present for additional writing assistance and support.
- Activity period assigned reading/writing of informational text.
- Guided study skills classes and tutorial/study halls.
- Read 180 computer program being used for reading deficiencies.
- Success-maker and IXL math computer based program for deficiencies in math.
- Making accommodation's according to the students IEP's.
- Reading accommodations (when appropriate) for tests and quizzes.

We continually seek opportunities to increase partnerships with all stakeholders for continued implementation of our District 236 plan and to provide the necessary learning opportunities, strategies and interventions to facilitate our district goals in all areas, with an additional focus on writing again this school year. I would like to end by again thanking each of you for your support of Heppner Schools, and your commitment to all students of the Morrow County School District.

Irrigon Elementary School

IES Spotlight on Writing Curriculum and Interventions

This year we also have our new Language Arts adoption, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Journey's in which teachers have been using the writing component of. Past Language Arts adoptions haven't had the cohesiveness of writing instruction that this one does. The teachers at Irrigon Elementary have been able to use the portions of Step up to Writing and Write Source as vehicles in which to teach, model and assign writing lessons from Journey's. In visiting with each grade level, they feel that this is a perfect combination of resources that they finally have at their fingertips.

Since being trained in the Fall of 2012, we have used the district adopted curriculum (Write Source) and supplement with the Step Up to Writing. Step Up to Writing is invaluable because it helps teach writing as a process rather than as an end product. This is highly evident in the lesson planning and instruction in each of our classrooms. Because Step Up to Writing is a system, it creates a common writing language throughout the grade levels.

Write Source and Step Up to Writing complement each other in that they both use graphic organizers to help students' ideas from rough draft form to well written essays that meet the requirements of the Oregon Writing Scoring Rubric. Teachers plan lessons that integrate writing into all subjects, have the expectation that students use complete sentences in all subjects and require free writing and editing daily at each grade level. It is easy for me to track writing lesson plans through our online plan book and lessons are aligned to state standards.

Celebrating our Students as Writers ~ Irrigon Elementary Annual Writing Olympics As Expressed by Ms. Cynthia Hodgdon, Writing Olympics Coordinator

The Writing Olympics is a celebration of the accomplishments of 4th, 5th, and 6th graders on the annual writing assessment. Festivities begin with Opening Ceremonies before the assessment is administered. At Opening Ceremonies, the fourth graders enter the gym with writing strategy posters encouraging students to succeed on the writing test. They are cheered on by fifth and sixth graders. Encouraging

speeches are given by administration and staff. The Opening Ceremony always ends with all students taking the Writing Oath, stating that they will do their best during testing.

In the weeks between Opening Ceremonies and Closing Ceremonies, teachers administer the writing assessment and score it according to the Oregon State Writing Rubric.

At the Closing Ceremonies students are awarded bronze, silver and gold medals. Scores are ranked and bronze, silver and gold medals are given based on scores ranging from meeting to exceeding. It is a time of celebration honoring the diligent work of IES students. Parents and MCSD administration are all welcome to attend this celebration of the hard work done by IES students. The 2014-2015 school year will mark the 6th year that IES has celebrated writing accomplishments with this event.



A photo from last year's Writing Olympics when Lilee Roggow scored all 5's based on the Oregon Writing Scoring rubric for her 6th grade writing work sample. *Pictured with her (from left to right)*

1st grade teacher/Principal, Erin Stocker

6th grade teacher, Fred Long

4th - 5th grade teacher, Angel Prongua

George Mendoza, Assistant Superintendent

Dirk Dirksen, Superintendent

Irrigon Jr/Sr High School

This year we have made some changes to our schedule which has allowed us to offer two sections of writing interventions at the high school level. Although this class is primarily for seniors, we have included a few select juniors who need extra support. Our intervention classes are designed to improve students' writing ability and to complete passing work samples to meet the essential skills requirement for graduation. The class is year-long and once students complete the passing work samples they are placed into an elective course.

Additionally, our schedule this year has allowed us to offer two sections of Read 180 at both the middle and high school levels. Read 180, which in addition to being a reading intervention, has embedded writing instruction as well. By offering several sections, we are able to keep these particular classes small allowing us a better opportunity for more individualized instruction.

Lastly, we have separated language arts instruction in the middle school into two distinct classes – one period of reading and one period of writing. Several years ago, through the use of Oregon Gear-Up funds, we were able to purchase Step-Up-To-Writing. This is a researched based systematic program that helps students become proficient writers. The continued and regular use of this program over time has proven very beneficial.

Riverside Jr/Sr High School

Writing interventions:

We have a building-wide focus on writing in the content areas. We continue to use Step Up To Writing in our content area classrooms as well as a focus on extended response writing items on assignments and assessments that is in alignment with the Smarter Balance test.

We also have a writing lab class for our seniors that have not passed their writing test. These seniors are working with Ms. Brown to strengthen their areas of weakness and are preparing to complete their first essential skill work sample.

Riverside was also notified that the class of 2020 will be part of the newest round of Oregon GEAR UP grants.

Sam Boardman Elementary School

Developing strong writing skills at SBE

When students arrive in Kindergarten, much of their literacy is in oral language, so we immediately begin building fundamental writing skills. The process is to build the fine motor skills necessary by drawing and then asking students orally to describe their drawings. Teachers and assistants then write what students say to help them recognize written language. At the same time, we use programs like Zoo Phonics to help students use letters as symbols with sounds that represent their speech. By the end of the year, the goal is for students to write a full sentence with words phonemically spelled.

In first grade, students work on writing more sentences, and spelling the words in those sentences correctly with programs such as systematic sight words. By second grade, students are writing full 8-12 sentence paragraphs. Teachers are using Step Up to Writing to teach students to organize those paragraphs into a structured, well thought-out paragraph.

By third grade, students are beginning to write multiple paragraphs. In addition, teachers are asking students to produce an independent writing sample each quarter to assess their progress, and these samples are scored according to the state writing rubric. Students who struggle with writing are assigned to smaller groups where teachers and assistants are able to provide more intensive guided practice.

Windy River Elementary

Windy River Elementary School has several different types of writing interventions that we use to improve on writing. Here are a few mentioned:

1. Writing Block: We have a forty minute writing block every day. This time is dedicated to writing good: sentences, paragraphs and essays. Writing also bleeds into the 110 minute Reading block when it is addressed in the new curriculum. Writing also is produced in Social Studies and in the extra 40 minute Language Arts intervention/enrichment time.
2. Step Up To Writing: our standard base instructional method is a program called Step Up To Writing. This is our third year with this program in place. This method of teaching writing gives teachers a common method to writing good paragraphs and essays. It shows students how to color code ideas and put them together to make well-crafted essays.
3. 6th Grade APA Formatting: this class is challenging the class to a higher standard of writing. This class is teaching students how to make a research paper/essay. This is the teachers first year with this approach. They teach how to make an essay with descriptive events, making a draft and peer editing. They will be given instruction on making a bibliography, citations in the essay and producing a product that would be required in a beginning college term paper. Students need to know what a basic high school/college term paper should look like.

4. New Journey's Textbook- Even though it is a Reading curriculum, there is writing embedded into its curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to use the new curriculum with fidelity. Therefore there is more writing to support the reading.

Management's Discussion and Analysis

Financial Highlights

We are not expecting any significant changes in state-wide funding in 2014-15 (second year of biennium). However, we are hoping to hear good news about future budgets very early in the legislative session

Future Financial Planning

The district is keeping with the current funding scenarios and not anticipating any significant changes.

Current Financial Issues and Concerns

We don't appear to have any financial issues or concerns – other than the ongoing funding.

Maintenance

The district issued an RFP for long-term planning and community meetings with the RFP closing on September 30, 2014. The district is also looking to issue an additional RFP for a project management vendor that would work with the district to develop maintenance planning, project scoping, purchasing, and project review. The goal of the two RFPs is to help in the long-term planning by building within Morrow County School District. We also believe that this will help expedite project completion by streamlining planning and purchasing. The projects that will be immediately impacted will be the following:

1. HVAC ventilators at SBE and RHS
2. HVAC front-end controls at ALL schools
3. Security within buildings – front door video and entry systems

We will also be working with the Energy Trust of Oregon (ETO) to ensure we maximize the incentives associated with each of the projects identified. We will also be expanding the energy savings network to try to facilitate a group that includes both ETO and local electric cooperatives.

The district is very close to completing the preventative maintenance module within our work-order system. We are in hopes this program will help us schedule regular maintenance on our HVAC, kitchen equipment, rolling stock (vehicles), and other items within the district (bleachers, basketball hoops, etc).

Other items

We are also working on purchasing two new vehicles to nearly complete the updating of our fleet. We will look to dispose of the aged vehicles along with other assets that are no longer being used in a surplus sale that will take place sometime in the spring. We hope that this will be the last of clean-up at the schools and finalize the last of the items from the old district office.

We have completed the updating of computers and appear to be in good shape in all school labs. The district believes that the next update in computing will be to move towards chromebooks as the majority of the educational applications are web-based and hosted. The purchases of these types of devices will be approximately half the cost of desktop computers.

Injury Report

No workers compensation claims to report at this time.