
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND BROKERING SERVICES

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Program Review
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Purpose:

CREC was contacted by Sherri Turner, district superintendent to conduct a k-3 early literacy program review at Center School in Litchfield. Its purpose is to examine curriculum and assessments to ensure that: a) the curricula and corollary assessments are aligned; b) that language arts curriculum meets the recommendations of evidence based practice from the What Works Clearinghouse practice guides and outcomes are aligned with the expectations of the Common Core State Standards c) data gathered from assessments are used to inform decision making. As a result of this review, feedback will be provided that can be used to direct program improvement by validating successes and identifying opportunities for growth. More specifically, recommendations will be given on literacy instruction and SRBI implementation.

Background Information:

Center School is a Pre-k-3 Elementary School in Litchfield, CT that has approximately 300 students.

Guiding Questions:

The following guiding questions were posed for this review:

1. Does the district provide comprehensive language arts instruction in grades K - 3 based on current research based recommendations?
2. Are the SRBI processes efficient and effective?

Methodology:

A variety of data was collected and analyzed in order to identify implementation of instruction and intervention to determine strengths and opportunities for growth. Please refer to Table 1 Matrix.

Documents

Curriculum documents and a representative sample of SRBI documents were reviewed using the Rubric for Evaluating Reading/Language Arts Instructional Materials for Kindergarten to Grade 5 by Foorman, Smith and Kosanovich. In addition, the sample SRBI documents were reviewed using CREC's MTSS Checklist.

Individual Staff Interviews

A representative number of certified faculty were interviewed individually including LA/SS Coordinator, reading interventionists, principal, a kindergarten teacher, a first grade teacher, a second grade teacher, and a third grade teacher. All staff members were welcoming to our visit and willing to share any information necessary for the review. It is obvious that their first priority is student learning and success.

Table 1: Matrix of key questions with a cross-walk of data sources

	Materials review	Focus Interviews
Does the district provide comprehensive language arts instruction in grades K - 3 based on current research based recommendations?	X	X
Are the SRBI processes efficient and effective?	X	X

Key Findings

Each question is addressed with a summary of the key findings.

Question 1	Materials Review	Focus Interviews
Does the district provide comprehensive language arts instruction in grades K - 3 based on current research based recommendations?	X	X

Summary Findings:

The materials rubric used in this review is organized by content areas and includes a list of criteria for evidence based practice that the instructional materials are expected to include. Each criterion is aligned to recommendations from six What Works Clearinghouse practice guides and a 1 - 5 scale is used to rate how well the criteria were met. As part of the review of the materials, the rubric allows for a review of the content and pedagogy of the instructional design. (See page 2 of the attached rubric) The results of the rubric will be shared according to those major areas.

1. Foundational Reading Skills - The district uses Fountas and Pinnell Word Study materials for instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics. These materials offer materials that are organized in an appropriate developmental order. However, the guidance from the teaching resources states that the lesson selection map “is not a rigid sequence; it is a continuum of easier to harder concepts.” This allows teachers to select lessons that they feel necessary. Instruction is not presented in an explicit, systematic or cumulative manner. Additionally, letter-sound correspondences are not presented in an explicit and sequential fashion. For example, potentially confusing letters like b and p are introduced together on one worksheet found within the materials. Teachers interviewed reported that they like the materials but felt that there were not enough lessons to choose from in any one skill area and it was difficult to implement them completely in the short amount of time that they have devoted to this content in their schedules which ranges from 15 to 20 minutes based on sample schedules provided by the

district. For example, in one of the word study manuals there was one lesson to teach students segmenting and blending which is a critical skill for early phonic decoding and spelling. The instructions to teachers is that they may need to repeat lessons multiple times but this still does not rise to the level of explicit, systematic and cumulative instruction that is the hallmark of good explicit phonics instruction. Overall, the Fountas and Pinnell materials are not designed to provide direct, explicit, sequential and cumulative instruction in letter-sound knowledge, decoding in isolation and in decodable text, syllable patterns, word analysis, encoding, multisyllabic words, and strategies for irregular words. The district administration reports that instructional time for phonics and word study instruction will increase in the 2018-2019 school year. In addition, the district has started plans to increase phonological awareness and phonemic awareness for the 2018-2019 school year.

2. Reading comprehension for literary and informational texts - The district uses Fountas and Pinnell materials and Teacher's college units of study for instruction using a workshop model. These materials provide options for texts for each grade band that align with the complexity requirements and instructional goals of the CCSS. The materials provide students with a variety of texts. There are suggested texts that allow for daily reading with and without feedback to support accuracy, fluency and comprehension. Materials include recommended texts that allow students to build vocabulary, self-monitoring strategies, close reading strategies, questioning skills, and discussion skills. Specific texts are included for teaching text structures, use of text-based evidence, and research skills. Teachers reported that they are satisfied with those materials. The teacher's felt that the workshop model in reading meets the needs of their students and aligns well with the grade level expectations of the CCSS.

Question 2	SRBI Material Reviews	Focus Interviews
Are the SRBI processes efficient and effective	X	X

Summary of Findings:

After staff interviews and reviewing the given sample documentation from SRBI files, including sample interventions, forms, and a flow chart, it is clear that the district does have an efficient system in place. Using the MTSS checklist under Teams/Process, the district would score between a 2 and 3. There is a clear team who meets regularly to analyze student data and use that data to make academic decisions. There are clear cycles of intervention, and movement between the tiers. It was unclear in the samplings and the interviews what clear data points that are used for special education recommendations, however, there are some additional screens in place such as dibels that are used to help in the referral process. In the area of instruction, the district would score between a 2 and a 3 because there is explicit instruction in place in addition to core instruction. It is unclear if there is a targeted goal that is being measured in all interventions, specifically Tier 1. Specifically in math, there seems to be multiple concepts and skills

being taught during one cycle of intervention. It is also necessary to align targeted goals with assessment. In this area, the district would score between a 2 and a 3. There is data being collected, it is unclear in some instances if the assessment aligns with the targeted goal. The progress monitoring is done weekly or biweekly. In addition, there is a universal screen in place, the NWEA Map assessment new this year and some of the data is being used for academic decision making, although it was established that this is a new screen and teachers need more professional learning on using this data to inform instruction and make decisions. There is a document that gives the language arts assessments given for the year at each grade level, it is unclear what the cutoff targets are for these assessments at the fall, winter, spring marks.

There is a reading recovery model being used for grade 1 on a 16 week cycle, the SRBI team meets weekly to discuss progress of students and look at the data. Eight children at a time are allocated for this intervention to maintain small groups. There is a SRBI flowchart Teacher Guide that gives very direct guidelines for the process and can easily be followed. In addition, new this year, teachers meet with the appropriate interventionists when a concern arises, and are given a folder. The interventionist and teacher establish a plan for tracking data in Tier 1. According to state recommendations, for generalization, the interaction between the interventionist and teacher is imperative. In addition, the Foundations program has been used this year for tier 2 and tier 3 intervention.

Commendations:

The CREC team appreciates the assistance of the Center School faculty and district administration in conducting this review. Staff were welcoming and forthcoming with both their time and information. It is quite evident that staff have a high regard and commitment to the students they serve. The district provides teachers with the necessary support and materials to provide instruction and intervention to all students at the school. Staff must also be commended for their commitment to continuous growth in continuously analyzing the effectiveness of instructional services at the school. All staff interviewed expressed a desire to deepen their understanding of reading instruction and intervention procedures. The Fountas and Pinnell units of study are appropriate for instruction at the Grade Three level.

Recommendations:

Recommendations fall into two main categories: Explicit Phonics Instruction and SRBI Processes. The recommendations in this report focus on the work necessary to improve learner outcomes by enhancing instructional practices.

Literacy Instruction:

- Provide all students in K and 1 with direct instruction in phonological awareness and phonemic awareness
- Provide all students in K - 2 in explicit phonics instruction that includes a handwriting component that links letter/sound correspondence to letter formation.

Training and Support:

- **SRBI-Writing** targeted, measurable, specific goals with assessments that directly assess the instruction in intervention. In addition, refining forms to build in targeted goals.
- General education teachers and reading interventionists require professional development in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and explicit phonics instruction. The teachers and interventionists at the school are highly skilled and professional instructors. However, there has

been a significant amount of new information in the state in light of the new legislations regarding reading instruction and the identification of students with specific disabilities in the area of reading. This training would help staff implement a model of continuous improvement in the area of language arts instruction.

Intervention and Instruction Recommendations:

- Interventionists should review current interventions to verify evidence of effectiveness. For example, current research on Reading Recovery finds that it “provides extensive opportunities for reading connected text. It is more limited in its phonic decoding instruction and does not correct the poor phonemic awareness skills that are limiting struggling readers”. (Kilpatrick 2015) While the program teaches strategies to address decoding, fluency and comprehension, a thorough review of peer reviewed research does not endorse it as a highly effective method of intervention for students with word level reading difficulties.
- Universal screens should be used as a guide for instruction and instructional decisions. It is okay to use a different screen for k-3 than for 4-12. The data has to be useful to instruction and decisions. For example screens in Kindergarten need to be linked to the foundational skills that they are supposed to have at the end of the grade. The district needs normed, curriculum based measures that assess letter name fluency, letter sound fluency and phoneme segmenting and blending.

Program List:

This is not an endorsement of any of these programs. It’s just a list of resources that meet many of the criteria for the kind of program that would be helpful for the school’s grade levels aligning with the findings and review team’s recommendations. The district should review each program in depth to make a decision.

<https://www.wilsonlanguage.com/programs/fundations/>

<https://www.projectread.com/primary-phonics/>

<http://www.successforall.org/our-approach/targeted-programs/fast-track-phonics/>

<http://www.pafprogram.com/>

<https://www.winsorlearning.com/sonday-system-1>

<https://www.learningbydesign.com/>

Rubric for Literacy Review

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2017219.pdf

MTSS Checklist for SRBI Review



MTSS Checklist 2.pdf