

Literacy Collaborative® in Dalton Public Schools

2014-2015 Executive Summary Year 11

Literacy Collaborative® is a comprehensive school reform model designed to improve the reading, writing, and language skills of elementary and middle school students. The cornerstone of this project is dynamic, long-term professional development. School-based literacy coordinators are trained in research-based methods and then provide on-site training for the teachers in their schools. The goal of this comprehensive effort is to increase the rate of student learning and to raise the level of literacy achievement of all students.

Who Are We?

Located in Dalton, Georgia, our district includes nine schools serving more than 7,703 students. Here, innovative faculty and staff work together to provide students with engaging work. This approach to learning is driven by our mission: to be a great learning organization where networked learning communities are the primary means of maintaining direction, establishing goals, assessing results, and assuring progress; creating, developing, importing, and exploring knowledge; and recruiting and inducting members.

Our students represent a diverse population with 69.5% reporting Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. 21.4% of the student body is White (Non-Hispanic), 4.4% Black (Non-Hispanic), 1.8% Asian and 2.9% Multi-Racial.

As a district, 80.6% of our student population qualifies as economically disadvantaged. Our district serves 1,320 English learners, 52 migrant, 417 homeless, 758 special education, and 783 gifted students. 42 immigrant countries are represented and 22 different native languages are spoken.

Literacy Collaborative in the News

Literacy Collaborative featured as a successful school improvement model in Edweek article, "[Turning Teachers into Coaches](#)" (Feb. 29, 2012).

"In recent years, the Literacy Collaborative has acquired an impressive research profile. Most prominently, a recently published longitudinal study by researchers at Stanford University found that the program boosted primary-grade students' reading skills by an average of 32 percent over three years. Other studies have tied the Literacy Collaborative to standardized test score gains (including among English-language learners), advances in student writing skills, improvements in instructional quality, and positive changes in both teachers' and students' perspectives on literacy instruction."

The Positive Effects of Literacy Collaborative on Teaching and Student Achievement: A Value-Added Study

A four-year longitudinal study of 17 Literacy Collaborative schools was completed in 2009 and the results show a large positive effect of the program on teaching and student information. This value-added study can be found on the Literacy Collaborative national website: literacycollaborative.org.

Literacy Collaborative in Dalton Public Schools, 2013-2014

In 2014-2015, the Literacy Collaborative framework was implemented in all kindergarten through fifth grade classes. A focused literacy approach continued into sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Each elementary school was supported by a primary and intermediate literacy coach. Additionally, there were two literacy coaches at the middle school. The district is supported by a primary district trainer.

A Community Goal

In 2012, The Dalton-Whitfield community made a public commitment to literacy and education. The City of Dalton, the Dalton Board of Education, Whitfield County, the Whitfield County Board of Education, the Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce and the Archway Partnership committed to support helping all area students read on grade level in the early grades.

As part of this work, Dalton Public Schools participates in and supports the community organizations *Readers to Leaders* and the *Northwest Georgia Regional Library Board*. These two groups have worked hard to increase the opportunities for literacy learning in our community through special events, summer activities, and Little Free Libraries throughout the community.

Big Red READS is a summer reading program supported by Dalton Public Schools and the Dalton Education Foundation. 2014-2015 marks the sixth year of implementation for this program which travels to area neighborhoods and distributes free books to all children and checks out leveled texts to elementary reader. To date, 10,000 free books have been distributed to the community. 3,658 Dalton Public Schools students have checked out bags of leveled books for summer reading.



Steps Toward the Goal:

2 nd Grade End of the Year Instructional Levels				
Year	Does Not Meet the Standard (Below L)	Approaches the Standard (L)	Meets the Standard (M)	Exceeds the Standard (N+)
2009-2010	24%	21%	21%	34%
2010-2011	19%	19%	23%	39%
2011-2012	17%	15%	27%	41%
2012-2013	23%	10%	24%	43%
2013-2014	19%	18%	23%	40%
2014-2015	27%	11%	23%	39%

3 rd Grade End of the Year Instructional Levels				
Year	Does Not Meet the Standard (Below O)	Approaches the Standard (O)	Meets the Standard (P)	Exceeds the Standard (Q+)
2009-2010	27%	15%	19%	39%
2010-2011	33%	18%	14%	35%
2011-2012	24%	16%	23%	37%
2012-2013	19%	10%	19%	52%
2013-2014	21%	11%	24%	44%
2014-2015	26%	6%	25%	43%

68% of our third grade students read at text levels that meet or exceed grade level expectations. It appears that more students are reading at text levels below grade level expectations than in previous years in both second and third grades. This suggests a continued need to monitor and focus on our below grade level readers throughout the year. Many literacy teams have addressed this in their goals for RtI and data collection.

Success in 2014-2015

- Professional development for K-5 teachers was designed and provided across the district. Highlights included focused work in the area of writing about reading and word study. The District Literacy Coordinator partnered with the English Language Learner teachers to provide support and training.
- Primary and Intermediate Year One courses were joined together in an effort to help teachers learn the continuum of literacy learning across all grade levels. It is hoped that this model will help our district develop a more cohesive and intentional vertical alignment in literacy.
- Several coaches and teachers had the opportunity to present at the Literacy for All Conference. Alice Ensley, District Literacy Coordinator presented across the state at the Summer Learning Academy sponsored by the Georgia Department of Education.
- Two Primary Literacy Coaches were trained at Lesley University.
- Cindy Downend, Lesley University Trainer visited our district and provided support and training for our District Literacy Team around the new expectations for benchmarking text levels.

Challenges

- Data indicates a need to continue our focus on word study. Additionally, we will need to focus on monitoring the progress of our students who are below and approaching grade level expectations.
- Our district is continuing to learn about the expectations of our teacher evaluation system and new state assessments. We will continue adjusting to these new demands and expectations while at the same time maintaining the integrity of our literacy implementation.
- Dalton Public Schools has been served by one district trainer in 2014-2015. There is a need to train more literacy coaches and district trainers for the future.

Points of Pride

- Eight Dalton Public Schools students were selected as RESA winners for the Young Georgia Author competition in grades K-12. Charlie Beckler, First Grade student at Westwood School was selected as the state winner for her informational piece entitled *Animals*.
- Reading Recovery celebrated its 10th year of implementation in Dalton Public Schools. In ten years our Reading Recovery teachers have provided this research based intervention to 1556 students and have supported over 5580 students in their role as EIP/ELL teachers.
- Dalton Public Schools is proud to have a K-8 Literacy Collaborative implementation. This year, Dalton Middle School has affiliated with Lesley University. Dalton Middle School has been innovative and creative in finding ways to implement a Readers' and Writers' workshop model. We look forward to continue learning with our Lesley University partners.

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