

CASE STUDY

New York School Districts' DIBELS Results Demonstrate the Efficacy of Explicit, Systematic Literacy Instruction

**The Monroe One Board of Cooperative
Educational Services, Fairport, New York**



Giving Teachers the Training and Tools they Need to Cultivate Successful Readers

As director of school improvement for Monroe One Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in Fairport, New York, Christine Treasure oversees the professional development offered to 10 different school districts in the region. Those districts range in size from a single K-12 school building to those with multiple different buildings.

Monroe One also contracts with organizations and consultants who present sessions like Lexia®'s LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) Suite. Professional learning that provides educators and administrators with deep knowledge to be literacy and language experts in the science of reading, LETRS was developed by literacy experts Dr. Louisa Moats, Dr. Carol Tolman, and Dr. Lucy Hart Paulson.

Treasure said the cooperative's previous director started using LETRS and that use of the professional development platform "spread really quickly" as more districts signed up for it. "The teachers who participated were very engaged and invested," she said, "and found LETRS to be a strong professional learning tool."

'I Wanted to Know More'

When she thinks about LETRS and the role it plays in Monroe One BOCES' professional development offering, Treasure sees it as a comprehensive professional learning experience for teachers. "It's not a program that you're teaching to students," she explained. "It's really what we should have learned during our pre-service training."

For example, even being elementary-certified and holding a master's degree in reading, Treasure admits her pre-service training didn't prepare her to teach reading. "I wanted to know more," she said. "I'm very vested in literacy and always have been."

Treasure moved into a curriculum coaching position when the New York state test was developed, forcing her to "dive deep" into the English Language Arts standards and get back into working with the teachers who would help students prepare for the assessments.

LETRS would soon prove itself as a valuable tool in that process. Through it, teachers gain the skills needed to master the fundamentals of reading instruction, including phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language.

"When I went through the LETRS experience, it was eye-opening," Treasure said. "Before LETRS, we talked about phonics from a much more constructivist, inquiry-based approach and did a lot of word study within a balanced literacy framework. I didn't realize what I didn't know. Now, I understand that explicit, systematic instruction is needed to fully address phonemic awareness and phonics."



Using Best Practices

Treasure's previous school district lacked a systematic, explicit phonics sequence and program and the dearth was showing in the district's DIBELS results. When it began using LETRS, those results began to improve over time.

"We'd tried some things, but after teachers went through LETRS, they asked different questions and started to really dig into the resources we were using," Treasure said, "and the resources we felt we needed to have to utilize best practices in teaching phonics to kids."

Treasure carried that positive impact and hands-on experience with LETRS with her into her current role with Monroe One. She talks often to district leaders about how beneficial the program has been, its comprehensive nature, and how quickly teachers catch onto using it.

"I tell district leaders to watch out because as soon as they send teachers to LETRS training, more teachers are going to want to go," Treasure explained. "This is one of those experiences that spreads; when teachers hear about it from their colleagues, they want to participate and attend."

Improving Reading Equity

By preparing teachers to cultivate successful readers, Monroe One is also expanding reading equity which directly supports the principles found in the New York State Education Department's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework.

"Reading is an equity issue, and the practices learned through LETRS are good for all students and help to provide access to the content and to the instruction for all learners," Treasure said.

"Teachers need a common learning experience themselves that they can attach new learning to and go back to when they're talking to their colleagues," she continued. "When they do the reading simulation in unit one of LETRS, it's eye-opening for them and also something that they can refer back to when talking about students."

Treasure concluded, "After going through the training, our teachers can use the information and knowledge they gained from the LETRS training to help students focus on what they need to do and/or understand why they need to do it."



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