

A graphic of a spotlight shining from the top left towards the center of the page.

Alaska School SPOTLIGHT

Alaska Gateway School District

September 2022

There have been significant changes at Alaska Gateway School District as we have delved deeper into the Science of Reading. We learned that the Science of Reading is the process of how brains learn to read! Through the lens of Science of Reading, we were prompted to start asking how we teach reading in Alaska Gateway.

We found that most of our schools and teachers utilized blended learning approaches based predominately on Balanced Literacy approaches. From there, our district reflection suggested that Balanced Literacy can look different from classroom to classroom and teacher to teacher. Some of our programming and instructional decisions benefited students, and other practices yielded fewer results and had less impact on reading achievement.

As we approached the topic of how to move forward, teachers and support staff attended reading workshops and classes and participated in school-based professional development. One pivotal moment came after a cadre of teachers, support staff, and administrators attended the Alaska Reading Symposium. That sealed the deal. Our next steps began a robust process of seeking a new program or curriculum matched with Science of Reading practices.

We met in small groups with DEED educators and consultants. Our committees read literature and peer-reviewed articles, and we had hard conversations about the next steps. We utilized a rubric, and a committee reviewed several currently on-trend reading programs over summer break. Our committee ultimately chose a program (Amplify CKLA) that met expectations in all areas on Ed Reports, a non-profit organization that reviews curriculum. Amplify CKLA also provides a program with an embedded universal screener and intervention support, which we felt was critical as we prepare for the Alaska Reads Act and multi-tiered supports.

Another essential part of our plan has been finding ways to increase connections with our families about our Strategic Plan Goal for every student to read on or above grade level by 3rd grade. Our research suggested that some of our students were entering kindergarten with limited exposure to reading and "lap time" with books. This year we implemented Project G.L.O.W. (Giving Little Ones Words). Each month our kindergarten students and their families will receive the gift of a free book and a family activity newsletter. At Alaska Gateway School District, we are excited about the changes and work with Science of Reading and believe a partnership approach with our families will have the highest impact!

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Our Mission: An excellent education for every student every day.