

External Review:
 Early Literacy Intervention (assessments & strategies)
 SD No. 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin)
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A. Introduction

Purpose of the external review

Immanent to education is change. People and social systems learn and evolve, and educational institutions both drive and respond to those changes as they interact with society's children and families. Over time, our practices may become homogeneously invisible, driven by inertia rather than intentional decision-making processes. Conversely, without ongoing connectivity they may become so unaligned that we find ourselves in conflict.

It is important, then, to step back and reflect upon the systems we have created: At this moment in time, where are we and what have we, as a system, learned? What are the key elements of our instructional practice? Are they effectively ensuring all students have meaningful learning experiences? Are we empowering our students to succeed in an ever-changing world? Is there something we could stop doing? What else might we be doing? In Eisner's words, a formal review of practice helps us to "understand a situation that might otherwise be enigmatic or confusing" (Eisner, 1991, p. 58).

Limitations and delimitations of the external review

An external review is integral to the above-mentioned reflective process in that it provides an outside perspective. The recommendations included in this document represent the considered, research-informed understandings of the reviewer but they are neither definitive nor prescriptive. Rather, they are intended to contribute information to an internal review process—a formative assessment process—providing fuel for in-district collaboration and planning.

While care has been taken to have a representative sample size and to triangulate evidence, the following **limitations** exist:

- Time:
 - Interviews and observations were limited to three days in April 2015. Classroom visits, in particular, may have produced different results over a longer period of time or at a different time of year.
- Sample:
 - Given the time constraints, it was not possible to visit schools farthest from town; conference calls and telephone interviews were conducted, but classroom observations were limited to schools nearer Williams Lake and 100 Mile House;
 - School-based inquiry plans were not submitted from all schools;
 - Students, parents and outside service providers were not included in the sample.

This report is **delimited** to the StrongStart, Kindergarten, and Grade One programs. Recommendations are written without holistic knowledge of School District No. 27 and its schools and, therefore, are not necessarily generalizable to grades and programs beyond the scope of the report.

Questions guiding the research

Four questions were provided to guide the external review:

1. What types of assessments does School District No. 27 use for all students from StrongStart through the end of Grade 1?
2. Does this assessment data give relevant information to teachers in being able to support individual student learning as part of an “assess-plan-teach” cycle?
3. What types of early intervention strategies does School District No. 27 use for students from StrongStart through the end of Grade 1 for students who are expected to have extreme difficulty learning to read and write?
4. Do these strategies effectively reduce the number of first-grade students who are expected to have extreme difficulty learning to read and write?

Definitions

For purposes of this study, the following definitions apply (**adapted from Special Education Services, 2006, pp. v-vi.*):

Assessment* is a systematic process of gathering information in order to make appropriate educational decisions for a student. It is a collaborative and progressive process designed to identify the student's strengths and needs, and to set goals. The purpose of assessment is the identification and implementation of selected educational strategies.

Interventions are teaching and assessment strategies specifically designed to accelerate learning for particular children so that they can achieve the learning outcomes. Essentially, interventions are “best practice” in personalizing learning. Interventions may be implemented either within or outside of the classroom. Generally, we speak of interventions in relation to the education of vulnerable or struggling students.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with, first, pre-referral interventions and, if necessary, interventions at increasing levels of support to accelerate their rate of learning. RTI models may expand the role of the School-Based Team to include collaboration regarding students who are struggling but not designated as having special needs within the school.

School-Based Team (SBT)* refers to an ongoing team of school-based personnel that has a formal role to play as a problem-solving unit in assisting classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies and to coordinate support resources for students who are vulnerable or struggling and, therefore, who require instructional intervention. Such students *may or may not be designated as having special needs within the school. The SBT may work within an RTI model to support teachers in working with diverse learners across the school.*

Transition* is the passage of a student from one environment to another at key points in his or her development.

Transition planning* is the preparation, implementation and evaluation required to enable young children to experience learning success when making major transitions during their lives from home to preschool/StrongStart to Kindergarten to Grade One; from class to class; from school to school.

Methodology

Evidence gathering

Qualitative methods were used to gather information from the following sources:

- Documents: 19 documents were studied and analyzed including Ministry of Education reports, School District No. 27 plans and reports, school-based inquiry plans, and Early Development Instrument (EDI) reports.
- Interviews: 32 individual and 11 group interviews, either in-person or by telephone, were conducted using a semi-structured format. Interviewees included StrongStart facilitators, Kindergarten teachers, Grade One teachers, Learning Support Teachers, Reading Recovery Teachers, Principals and Vice-Principals, and District-based staff.
- Observations: Observations of student engagement were conducted in 9 classrooms and learning support situations with reference to criteria developed by Peter H. Johnston (2015) (see Appendix A). Informal visits were made to an additional 5 classrooms and a StrongStart Centre.

Evidence analysis

- Recording: All evidence collected was coded and recorded on a matrix as informing either (1) a review question (#1, 2, 3, or 4), or, (2) evidence of student learning, instructional practice, or leadership practice, or, (3) a recommendation.
- Patterns: Factual information (e.g., name of an assessment practice) was sorted in order of number of responses in relation to interviewees.
- Triangulation: Opinions or conclusions stated by interviewees were corroborated across sources of evidence through triangulation.
- Conclusions and recommendations by the reviewer: These are based on preponderance of evidence from sources as described above, with reference to published research. Research sources are cited.

B. Assess: gathering the evidence

Introduction

Each question will be discussed in terms of StrongStart, Kindergarten, and Grade One. Responses have been analyzed and organized with regard to preponderance of evidence.

StrongStart

1. **What types of assessments does School District No. 27 use for all students in StrongStart?**
 - a. **Observation:** All StrongStart facilitators interviewed report that assessment of participants' development is informed largely through observation. Early Childhood Educator training prepares them to note the milestones of child development across multiple domains, and they continue to meet once a month for professional learning regarding the formative assessment of their students' growth. Here they explore specific indicators of typical child development as well as signs of differences and delays. Interviewees are articulate regarding what they watch for. When observation is insufficient, facilitators move to dynamic assessment. In the words of one facilitator, "If I'm not sure about a child's language development, I just sit down with her and have a conversation."
 - b. **Parent conversations:** Because adults attend StrongStart with the children, all facilitators have many informal conversations with parents about their child's development milestones and behaviours.
 - c. **Nipissing District Developmental Screen:** When facilitators or parents have questions or concerns about a child's development, parents are referred to this screening tool. Facilitators then discuss the results with the parents, explaining implications, suggesting home strategies, and, potentially, referring them to community service providers.
2. **Does this assessment data give relevant information to teachers in being able to support individual student learning as part of an "assess-plan-teach" cycle?**
 - a. **Yes...**StrongStart activities and centres are planned to support parents and families in scaffolding children along the same developmental continua used for assessment. Ongoing formative assessment practices are individual and personalized, as are the ensuing activities and conversations: the StrongStart facilitator adapts centres and interactions in alignment with the children's learning needs. In addition, parents are given suggestions and resources for supporting their child's learning at home and, potentially, in seeking community assessment of and support for their child's specific learning profile.
 - b. **Sometimes...**StrongStart facilitators, principals, and Kindergarten teachers all identified the importance of an excellent communication flow regarding the learning profiles of students moving from StrongStart to Kindergarten. While facilitators and Kindergarten teachers in StrongStart host-schools often engage in valued *ad hoc* conversations about specific children, formalized transition structures are in place in only a few schools. Because of this, schools that do not host StrongStarts tend to have limited access to information about children entering Kindergarten. Principals in particular expressed a desire for clear and consistent communication channels regarding the development of children both in StrongStart and transitioning from StrongStart to Kindergarten.

3. **What types of early intervention strategies does School District No. 27 use for students in StrongStart who are expected to have extreme difficulty learning to read and write?**
- a. **StrongStart** is itself an intervention designed to support healthy, holistic early learning development – language, physical, cognitive, social and emotional. It provides activities, information, and connection for all families who attend, including those whose children may have extreme difficulty with literacy acquisition.
 - b. The StrongStart facilitator pays specific attention to the **assessment of oral language development**, widely accepted as the foundation of literacy acquisition, and refers the families of students with challenges to community service providers.
 - c. **Parental awareness of developmental norms:** As mentioned previously, the StrongStart facilitator provides materials and advice in helping parents to understand early childhood development. When the facilitator has concerns about a child’s development, she carefully and empathetically brings this to the attention of the parents, providing screening materials to help build their awareness of their child’s strengths and challenges.
 - d. When StrongStart facilitators feel the child/family needs assessment or support beyond what they are able to provide, they either contact directly or refer parents to the following **service providers**, with the goal that children receive professional assistance for learning differences prior to Kindergarten:
 - i. Interior Health: All StrongStart facilitators interviewed said that they find the local Health Unit, particularly the Speech Language Pathologist, to be very communicative and helpful in supporting families.
 - ii. Child Development Centre (CDC): StrongStart facilitators, principals, and some teachers reported that, while the CDC is very helpful to the mainstream school, the relationship with StrongStart is largely “overwhelming and non-responsive.”
 - iii. Other service providers mentioned were: supported daycare, infant-toddler development workers, and the Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre.
 - iv. Handouts & literature: Community service providers supply StrongStart Centres with literature for parents.
 - e. The StrongStart facilitator serves as an **interpreter of the school system** for parents who may not have the confidence or knowledge for effective communication with teachers and administrators, becoming a *de facto* broker of cultural collateral for marginalized families. Some StrongStart facilitators mentioned that it is particularly helpful when their children and families are included in school activities such as assemblies and seasonal events, but that this is not consistent across schools. This finding is supported by provincial reports, which underscore how beneficial it is for parents to have an “opportunity to observe the positive learning environment schools provide” (HELP, 2007, p. 30).
 - f. StrongStart provides **transition support** for some students entering Kindergarten. Facilitators report going into the Kindergarten classroom as “one familiar face” for students who are having extreme trouble adjusting. Also, some facilitators welcome kindergarten students back into the StrongStart Centre for the imaginative play opportunities that are difficult to provide in a multi-age classroom. Again, these contacts are limited to those schools that host StrongStart Centres.

- g. **Ready Set Learn** is scheduled throughout the district, including at rural schools, to build both understanding of positive parenting and familiarity with the people who provide service at the organizations listed above.
 - h. **Playgroups** are scheduled in some areas where StrongStart is not available.
4. **Do these strategies effectively reduce the number of students who are expected to have extreme difficulty learning to read and write? Respondents say:**
- a. "Lots of needs are being met: young moms; new families; community connections. StrongStart is working. It's a wonderful program that builds confidence in children and parents. Right now we have new families to Williams Lake and both parents are coming; I see lots of friendship building."
 - b. "People ask, 'Are we getting to the "target" child?' They are ALL target children! So many parents are no longer doing the interactive art and music and other strategies at home."
 - c. "Families at-risk don't trust. The big thing is to get them to work with school and community support. Families share a lot and make connections with each other. I help give them advice about the school system and how to work with it—what to say and how to say it, and who to talk to."
 - d. "We have good relations with K teachers. We chat in the halls and pass on strengths, weaknesses... It's especially great for multi-age classrooms because students have known each other for quite a few years in StrongStart."
 - e. StrongStart facilitators and principals agreed that many vulnerable families do not attend StrongStart, but that the families who come need to be there and that they benefit from the experience.

Kindergarten

1. **What types of assessments does School District No. 27 use for all students in Kindergarten? In order of coverage, assessments reported for whole-class use are:**
- a. **The Observation Survey:** Each of the interviewed Kindergarten teachers (N=7) and school groups/principals (N=10) report that student strengths and needs are assessed using aspects and adaptations of The Observation Survey (Clay, 2002, 2005), especially "Concepts About Print" and "Letter Identification" as included in the SD27 kit, "Kindergarten Screening Tools". This is the predominant tool used for assessment of Kindergartners' literacy development across the district. District staff and school inquiry plans corroborated this finding.
 - b. **Speech and Language Kindergarten Screen:** Speech Language Pathologists report that 100% of Kindergarten children are assessed through the district's Speech and Language Kindergarten Screening process. Principals and teachers also report this screening, though some are not aware that all children are screened.
 - c. **School Wide Write:** Most of the interviewed Kindergarten teachers and school groups report that they participate in the School Wide Write, at least toward the end of the school year, analyzing student writing samples with reference either to the Provincial Performance Standards for Writing (Grade 1) or their own professional judgement.

Reading Recovery Teachers assess students' spontaneous word writing using the Word Spree method.

- d. **PM Benchmark Reading Assessment:** Half of the interviewed Kindergarten teachers and focus groups report that they use the PM Benchmark Reading Assessment toward the end of the school year to assess students' reading development.
- e. **Oral language development:** Two teachers and 1 school inquiry plan report that they formatively assess Kindergarten students' oral language development throughout the school year.

2. Does this assessment data give relevant information to teachers in being able to support individual student learning as part of an "assess-plan-teach" cycle?

- a. **Yes...**in terms of letter and book knowledge, reading, and writing. All Kindergarten teachers and school groups report that sufficient information is gathered for instruction in breaking and applying the alphabetic code. Teachers are well informed about what their children know; they plan activities and stations with this knowledge in mind; they address letter and book knowledge learning outcomes through direct instruction. Toward the end of the year, as students begin to read, PM Benchmark assessment is introduced in many classrooms and students are matched with "right-fit" books. This finding is corroborated through classroom visits: in each of the 7 Kindergarten classrooms visited, children were either (1) carrying book bags that contained personalized selections and reading/viewing books alone or with a partner; (2) listening to an adult read, or (3) working at stations involving letters and/or letter sounds. Word Walls and student writing (invented spelling) were visible in each classroom.
- b. **Sometimes...**Teachers report that assessment information for Kindergarten-intake is spotty. In the words of one principal, "There are too many unknowns." Two principals report that they hold transition meetings with StrongStart and Supported Daycare and that these have proven helpful. Kindergarten teachers find their informal conversations with StrongStart facilitators invaluable, but not every teacher has access to these. Information from the Child Development Centre reportedly arrives too late in the Kindergarten year to assist teachers in planning for instruction.
- c. **Sometimes...**Speech Language Pathologists (SLP's) conduct a quick screen of every Kindergarten student's speech and language development. Children deemed vulnerable are assessed further and, if necessary, referred for full assessment and service. Copies of the screens are given to teachers for review and filing. Rural schools report that the collaborative interpretations of these assessments and the service that accompanies them are extremely important in informing classroom instruction and speech/language programming. Likewise, town schools with high populations of vulnerable students report that the post-screening information about students and accompanying suggestions for classroom instruction are very helpful in planning and teaching. Other schools and teachers, however, report that they receive little information and that much of the screening comes too late in the year to be helpful.
- d. **Rarely...**Foundational to literacy is the development of oral language, including phonological awareness/fluency. Only two teachers and 1 school report the use of rubrics or assessment tools for ongoing formative assessment of students' language development. Other teachers "observe" and "listen" but do not mention analytical tools that might guide classroom practice in oral language development.

- e. **No...**Further to (d), there were no references to the BC Kindergarten Emergent Literacy Continua (Oral Language, Social Responsibility, Reading and Viewing, Writing and Representing, Numeracy) for informing instruction.

3. What types of early intervention strategies does School District No. 27 use for students in Kindergarten who are expected to have extreme difficulty learning to read and write?

- a. **Extra adults in the classroom:** In each school, teachers and school groups report that at least some extra in-class support is given by adults to children deemed extremely at-risk for difficulties with literacy acquisition: Education Assistants (EA), First Nations Support Workers (FNSW), Learning Support Teachers (LST), administrators, and volunteers come into the classroom either to work/read with individual students and small groups, or to free the classroom teacher to spend individual/small group time with vulnerable students. EA time is automatically allocated to each K/1 split class, though principals question the rationale behind this practice.
- b. **“Pull-out” support:** While in all schools some form of intervention happens in the classroom, 6 schools report that Kindergarten students receive intensive intervention outside of class. Pull-out intervention strategies vary: Talking Tables for English Language Learners; FNSW’s support both academic and cultural development; SLP’s pull out individual children; the LST may work on discrete skills or work with a small guided reading group; in some schools, the Reading Recovery teacher works with small groups toward the end of the year.
- c. **Personalization of instruction:** Interviewees report that personalized programs are the norm for Kindergarten students in SD27 who have 1701 designations: gradual entry and ½-day programs; individualization with EA support; SLP plans with EA support; and SLP back-and-forth books were cited as interventions for students with extreme challenges. In addition, 2 rural schools with multi-age classrooms report that instruction is individualized for all Kindergarten students.

4. Do these strategies effectively reduce the number of Kindergarten students who are expected to have extreme difficulty learning to read and write?

- a. **Extra adults in the classroom:** Teachers, groups, and principals agree that adult help in the classroom is the most effective framework for supporting early literacy intervention at the Kindergarten level. EA’s or FNSW’s either (1) work with individuals/groups who are having difficulties learning to read and write, or, (2) take the larger body of the class while the teacher works with a child or group experiencing challenges with reading and writing. Teachers find the latter to be the most effective in supporting children with extreme difficulties with text. Even without prompting, most teachers and principals underscored the importance of EA’s and FNSW’s in literacy instruction and asked for increases in their time. No mention is made of these adults holding conversations with children that intentionally press them toward development of conversational skills, questioning, or vocabulary development.
- b. **Pull-out support:** Some English Language Learner (ELL) teachers, Reading Recovery (RR) teachers and LST’s take small groups of children for Talking Tables, guided reading, reading strategies, or discrete skill development. While the in-class, holistic support described immediately above is seen as effective with most children, teachers find that SD27’s pull-out programs, when targeted at specific needs and conducted by specialist teachers or EA’s with special training (e.g., speech language EA’s), are helpful for students with extreme difficulties. It is notable that “pull-out” is the ONLY direct mention of instruction and intervention in relation to oral language development in

almost every school and classroom. While many people talk about the low language levels of children entering school, almost no one articulates the strategies they are using to address that concern.

- c. **Personalization of instruction:** Teachers are able to cite examples of success for students who have extreme difficulties, including those with 1701 designations who are on Individual Education Plans. With ongoing scaffolding, some students who were not able to spend more than a few minutes in the classroom at the beginning of the year are now able to participate meaningfully for half the day. SLP plans, where applicable, are implemented by EA's and are deemed to be effective in supporting speech and language development. Again, ownership for language development seems to rest with people other than the classroom teachers. "The SLP and the parents have a back and forth book that seems to be working." When asked for details, the teacher replies, "Oh, that's just between them. I don't look at it." As with other interventions, the focus is on the specifics of reading and writing, "exploding the code", and learning features of text.

Grade One

1. **What types of assessments does School District No. 27 use for all students in Grade 1? In order of coverage, assessments reported for whole-class use are:**
 - a. **PM Benchmark Reading Assessment:** 12 of the interviewed Grade One teachers (N=13) and 12 of school groups/principals (N=12) report use of this resource. Most implement this twice a year; a few, three times; and one school, four times.
 - b. **School-Wide Writes:** 11 of the 13 interviewed Grade One teachers and 11/12 school groups/principals report the use of School-Wide Writes at least twice per year. Student samples are analyzed with reference to the Provincial Performance Standards.
 - c. **Running Records of Oral Reading Behaviours:** 7 of the 13 interviewed Grade One teachers report taking daily running records to assess individual students' reading levels, strategies and skills. This translates into each child being individually assessed either once or twice a month, depending on the amount of difficulty they are having (5 of the 7 use error analysis to ascertain each student's access to visual, semantic, and syntactic cueing systems; 2 of the 7 use the CAFÉ matrix to analyze for Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expanding vocabulary).
 - d. **A variety of other assessment resources:** Learning Support Teachers, in particular, report a wide variety of additional resources used to assess student growth in the various components of literacy development. In addition to the holistic measures above, some report using The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (receptive language), IDEA Proficiency Test (expressive language), and the Brigance Vocabulary Comprehension test. One school inquiry plan records the Alberta Diagnostic Reading Program as providing evidence of student learning, a practice that is questionable for reliability given its age.
2. **Does this assessment data give relevant information to Grade One teachers in being able to support individual student learning as part of an "assess-plan-teach" cycle?**
 - a. **Sometimes...School-Wide Writes** are used at least semi-annually in 11 of the 12 schools. Student strengths and needs are analyzed with reference to the Provincial Performance

Standards. Principals report that teachers use this information to develop priorities for instruction at the beginning of the year and each term. Teachers corroborate this, but do not report any ongoing use of the Writing Performance Standards in assessing and informing day-to-day learning.

- b. **Sometimes...**The 7 teachers who report taking daily running records (so that all students are assessed at least once each month) report that they use: (1) levels analysis to support decisions about grouping and text selection; (2) error and response analysis to support prompting for strategies and skills when working with individuals or small groups; and (3) meta-analysis for setting priorities for whole-class instruction. Semi-formal observations in two of these classrooms confirm that ongoing assessment is used to inform daily practice. **But...**Those teachers who report less frequent use of running records tend to assess instructional and independent reading levels only, information that is used for grouping students and selecting texts. Such practice cannot support the finely-tuned, incremental coaching that is known to accelerate the learning of students who come to the reading process with fewer building blocks than their peers. This finding was confirmed in conversations with principals, RR teachers, and LST's.
- c. **Sometimes...**The PM Benchmark Reading Assessment is designed to give the teacher practical information about each student's independent and instructional reading levels, comprehension, fluency, and self-management of strategies during oral reading. Though half of the teachers use the Benchmark information as intended, 6 of the 12 teachers assess for grouping purposes or reporting only; only 2 of the 12 principals report that they meet with staff members to analyze the fall PM Benchmark results and use these to inform site-based decisions.
- d. **Rarely...**Consistent with Kindergarten practice, only 2 teachers report assessing for oral language and using that information to inform classroom instruction.
- e. **No...**One of the thirteen teachers reports using no structured assessment practices. "I listen and observe, have it in my head, and write later." Unlike other teachers in the school, this teacher neither participates in the school-wide write, uses the PM Benchmark assessment, nor takes running records. While assessment-informed, intentionally-scaffolded literacy instruction results in children learning at different rates, this teacher reports that "all the students are at the same level," even though this is a multi-grade classroom.

3. What types of early intervention strategies does School District No. 27 use for students in Grade One who are expected to have extreme difficulty learning to read and write?

- a. **Reading Recovery:** 10 of the 13 interviewed teachers report that students in their class receive Reading Recovery support. Currently, Reading Recovery is offered to the 15% (20% in previous years) of students expected to have the most difficulty learning to read and write, limited to schools where 20% of the grade one population equals at least one student.
- b. **Reading Strategies:** Some Grade One teachers participate in the first several sessions of the district's Reading Recovery training program. They then offer Reading Recovery-like support to individuals or small groups of students in their class or school.
- c. **Learning Support Teachers:** Over and above Reading Recovery, 6 teachers report that some of their students work with the LST on either an individual or small group basis. The LST tends to work with small groups of students who are slightly stronger those who qualify for Reading Recovery. In these groups, some LST's use a guided reading

approach, others focus on reading strategies, some report synthetic phonics instruction. In a few schools, the LST comes into the classroom. Teachers are finding this to be more effective in supporting student learning than the more traditional pull-out model. Some schools have access to an itinerant LST. Teachers and principals report that her work tends to be consultative with teachers and EA's implementing suggested strategies.

- d. **EA/FNSW support:** 6 teachers report that either EA's or FNSW's are allocated to their classrooms at least part-time. EA's and FNSW's tend to work within the classroom, under the guidance of the teacher.
 - e. **Other "pull-out" interventions:** ELL teachers and SLP's provide support to students who are designated as having special needs.
 - f. **Classroom practice:** While not strictly an intervention, our public education system depends upon excellent, classroom-based practice for its core service delivery. While good first teaching is important for every child, it is particularly important for those children who experience extreme difficulty with literacy acquisition. Schools cannot rely on specialist intervention to support all the literacy needs of these students, and much can be done to scaffold their learning in class. In SD27, the instructional design, classroom structures, and resources use are quite consistent across the district; the detailed application of these elements to student need, however, is quite different, resulting in marked differences in the level and quality of student engagement from class to class.
 - g. **Professional collaboration:** This is not an intervention that touches students directly. However, several schools report that groups of classroom and specialist teachers are meeting to interpret assessments and to plan for instruction, many through a Professional Learning Community approach, and that this collaboration increases their effectiveness with students who are vulnerable. Several itinerant specialists (e.g., LST's, SLP's) also work within a collaborative, consultative model.
 - h. **Resources:** Resources that feature Aboriginal images and stories have been added to classroom and library collections in some schools. Levelled books are available in most schools for independent practice and small group coaching.
4. **Do these strategies effectively reduce the number of (end of) first-grade students who are expected to have extreme difficulty learning to read and write?**
- a. **Reading Recovery:** Interviewed teachers, principals, and district staff are *unanimous* in saying that Reading Recovery is an effective intervention. District reports corroborate this, stating that each year about 70% of students enrolled in Reading Recovery—those Grade One students in each school having the most difficulty learning to read and write—are reading at the "class average" by the end of 12-20 weeks. This result is consistent with other Reading Recovery programs across Canada. Interviewees agree that they would like to see an increase in the number of children who have access to Reading Recovery. There are, however, several caveats to this affirmation as well as significant confusion regarding the role of Reading Recovery in a district's/school's overall assessment, instruction, and intervention plan. Please see the "Analyze" section below for a deeper analysis of SD27's Reading Recovery program.
 - b. **Reading Strategies:** Grade One teachers who have taken this training report that they are much better prepared to support students with extreme difficulties than they were before the training. In the words of one teacher, "It's the best thing I've ever done in my career. I'd like a refresher!" Teachers find it particularly effective in informing one-on-

one in-class intervention; some have added individualized coaching sessions in the afternoon, over and above the literacy instruction offered in the morning. Several teachers say they want to take this training; some ask that it be offered on Professional Development Days.

- c. **Learning Support Teachers:** Again, everyone interviewed expresses a desire for more LST time. However, teachers and schools are inconsistent in their support of the service delivery model. Many would like to see the Reading Recovery Teacher/LST position merged; some classroom teachers would like to end the pull-out model and work collaboratively with the LST in the classroom; still others believe the model is working well because the LST works to develop discrete skills while the Reading Recovery teacher operates from a more holistic model. French Immersion teachers report that neither French Language Learning Support nor French Language Reading Recovery is available for their students.
- d. **EA/FNSW support:** Teachers and principals agree that EA support is valuable and positively impacts student learning, provided whichever educator has the strongest skills in a particular area is working with the students who have the greatest challenges in that area. Depending on student need, this may be either the aide or the classroom teacher.
- e. **Classroom practice:** Interviews and classroom visits provide evidence of considerable variance in effectiveness among Grade One teaching practices around the district. Some practices are powerful in supporting learning for struggling students; some are much less so. As mentioned above, the inconsistencies in effectiveness are not related to elements of lesson/program design but with the actions and words of teachers, in-the-moment, within those elements.

In SD27, if one looks only at the framework teachers use to organize their instruction, it is possible to conclude that there is consistency of practice from class to class and from school to school. Teachers understand that children should be reading easier texts when they have less support; they know the difference between “instructional” and “independent” reading levels. The design of learning experiences, then, looks similar. Whether one calls it “a balanced literacy model” or “Daily 5”, most teachers structure the day to include some version of the following activities:

- 1) the teacher reads aloud to the class and facilitates students’ thinking and response holistically;
- 2) the whole class sits near a big book or chart and works together on reading stories or completing cloze sentences that are designed to build discrete skills;
- 3) the teacher coaches and prompts a small, homogeneous group of students (or an individual student) in solving reading or writing problems at the moment they are encountered in tasks at their instructional level;
- 4) the student reads/writes with the help of a peer; and
- 5) the student develops fluency by independently reading easy books or writing ideas of their own choosing using familiar words.

Classroom structures, therefore, look much the same across the district. In almost every classroom there is a carpeted area with a teacher chair and an easel for whole-class work, a “word wall” to scaffold independent reading and writing, bins of books

organized by level of difficulty, a rainbow or small table for small group teaching, and children carrying book bags with “familiar book” collections. Accomplishing this level of consistency is no small feat. Clearly, a lot of professional development has focused on instructional design in grade one literacy classrooms.

Inconsistent, however, is the language and action teachers use to invoke and support learning within the activities that give life to the framework. In some classrooms, the language is elevated and intentional, pushing children toward critical thinking, problem-solving and unique perspectives. In other classrooms, the teachers’ words limit student thinking and efficacy. The differences become apparent especially when focusing on the words and actions of the children. While classrooms and teacher practices look similar around the district, student engagement and conversation looks markedly different. Again, this will be discussed further in the “Analyze” section of the report.

- f. **Professional collaboration:** Teachers and principals report that professional judgement improves through collaboration, especially the collaborative inquiry embedded in the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model: children are more likely to meet grade level outcomes when they are in the classrooms of teachers who meet with colleagues to discuss individual students’ learning strengths and needs, instructional strategies targeted at those strengths and needs, and the elements within those strategies that are important in supporting student learning. One first-grade teacher tells the story of being new to a staff, struggling with the deep needs of so many students, and then gradually becoming “much more in control of this” through meeting with other primary teachers for collaborative inquiry. “We are seeing LOTS of growth in Grade One; LOTS of writing. We got them reading! There’s a really good team at this school.” She contrasts this with her previous school where she felt alone and unsupported, and her students did not learn to read.

This finding is consistent with the research embedded in BC’s Changing Results for Young Readers inquiry project. Teachers learned to look more closely at their students and their practice not in isolation but in teams that gave them multiple perspectives on the child. “The more fully they were able to describe the student’s strengths and needs, the intervention, and the rationale for the intervention, the greater the progress they saw in the child’s reading” (Jeroski, 2013). Teamwork facilitated this empowering analysis.

- g. **Resources:** Only a few schools report that they intentionally aim resource purchases at student needs identified through assessment. Among those who do, most-mentioned are resources that contain First Peoples images and content. No one reports evidence of the impact of this on student learning. Research, however, underscores the importance of this as an intervention: “First Peoples students will see themselves, their families, their cultures, and their experiences represented as being valued and respected. Non-First Peoples students will gain a better understanding of and appreciation for the significance of First Peoples within the historical and contemporary fabric of this province” (FNEESC, 2012).

C. Analyze: interpreting the evidence

Introduction

Any discussion of the evidence must be contextualized in the following list of strengths:

- ✓ StrongStart facilitators are skilled in assessing and supporting early childhood development;
- ✓ StrongStart facilitators work with parents to assess their children’s development; they refer parents to community service providers for support if necessary;
- ✓ StrongStart or other pre-Kindergarten programs are available in most areas of the school district;
- ✓ Kindergarten teachers are aware of the importance of oral language development as a foundation for learning;
- ✓ With a few exceptions, Grade One teachers are using such authentic assessment tools as The Observation Survey and PM Benchmarks—they are assessing reading by listening to children read and having conversations about reading;
- ✓ Professional Learning Communities in many schools are focusing teacher attention on assessment for learning;
- ✓ For the most part, teachers are utilizing a balanced literacy framework to organize instruction, with text levels being adjusted in relation to levels of support;
- ✓ Throughout the district, educators are using assessments to plan interventions for students having extreme difficulty learning to read and write;
- ✓ SD 27 runs its own Reading Recovery training program, ensuring access not only to initial training but also to ongoing professional learning for Reading Recovery teachers;
- ✓ Reading Recovery is available in many schools;
- ✓ The Reading Recovery Teacher Leader is taking ownership for strengthening literacy instruction in classrooms;
- ✓ Reading Recovery is strengthening teacher practice in classrooms;
- ✓ Reading Recovery is effectively reducing the numbers of children beyond Grade One with extreme difficulty learning to read and write.

Three significant and interrelated themes emerge from the evidence gathered in relation to the four guiding questions. First, the most widespread theme across interviews and documents is the impact and role of SD27’s Reading Recovery program. Second, students’ oral language development on entering school is raised as a common concern, yet strategies for assessing and addressing oral language notably lack intention beyond StrongStart. Third, many questions and comments arise about the alignment and systemization of the various approaches to assessment, instruction and intervention within the school district.

The impact of Reading Recovery in School District No. 27

Reading Recovery has a profound and signifying impact on the students and educators of School District No. 27. Because the implementation is now decades old, it has threaded its way through many layers and dimensions of learning and practice. To some degree, at least in the elementary years, it might be considered the DNA of practice as it has driven not only early literacy intervention but also broad-based assessment, instructional frameworks in both primary and intermediate classrooms, and school-based decisions. The following bear notice as situating the ensuing discussion:

- ✓ The district's Reading Recovery training centre heavily influences priorities for professional learning across the early primary grades;
- ✓ The Reading Recovery Teacher Leader works closely with other leaders to bring about alignment of approaches;
- ✓ Reading Recovery has attacked the myth that certain types of kids simply aren't cut out for reading.
- ✓ By empowering students, teachers and schools with a success mindset, Reading Recovery has positively impacted the culture of elementary education in the Cariboo-Chilcotin.

The Impact of Reading Recovery as an intervention

Research around the world agrees that Reading Recovery is an effective intervention for children who are expected to have extreme difficulty learning to read and write (Pinnell, et al, 1994; Schwartz, 2005; US Dept. of Education). Whether difficulties are event-based (e.g., caused by lack of experience, unfamiliarity with English, poor instructional practices) or organically-based (e.g., resulting from differences in the child's neurological structures), the in-the-moment personalized coaching that comprises Reading Recovery has been known to help approximately 75% of participants gain control over the reading process and, thereby, set out on a road of self-determined learning that carries them to the level of their peers. Indeed, it is currently the only early reading intervention cited by the US Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse as having demonstrated effectiveness in accelerating children's literacy learning. Because of this, in an effort to bolster its children's chronically low achievement, the United States has chosen Reading Recovery for nation-wide implementation (May, et al, 2013).

Results in the Cariboo-Chilcotin support these global findings. Approximately 15% of SD27's Grade One cohort is enrolled in Reading Recovery. These students are assessed prior to invention as being the "lowest of the low". Each year, about 70% of these students are "discontinued" meaning that they reach the average reading level of their classmates in 12-20 weeks. The remaining 30% are "referred out" of Reading Recovery with descriptors of their current progress, strategies they are able to use, and recommendations for further support. While they have not reached the class average reading level, they have made progress and, according to their teachers, "see themselves as readers" with willingness to continue learning.

This annual change in trajectory for about 35 children deemed at extreme risk is not to be minimized. Without effective intervention, many of these children would go on to experience years of failure in the school system. Past and recent research underscores the damaging, cascading effects of failure in the early grades. Lack of reading ability is a major contributing factor in retention decisions, and we know that "kids who repeat a year between kindergarten and fifth grade are 60 percent less likely to graduate high school than kids with similar backgrounds, and even 60 percent less likely to graduate high school than siblings in the same family" (Andrew, 2014).

Tracked over time, about half of discontinued students in Cariboo-Chilcotin schools continue to fully meet or exceed grade-level literacy expectations through Grade Seven. In schools that implement instructional practice that is informed by the complex reading theory embedded in Reading Recovery, an additional 10% fully meet or exceed Grade Seven expectations in reading and writing. Across the district, a further 30% at least minimally meet those expectations. What this means is that these students who were in the lowest percentiles at school entry are able to read textbooks across subject areas, enjoy novels, conduct research, write reports, write emails to their grandparents, participate in social media, and understand menus in restaurants. If you are one of these children in our highly literate nation, your life chances have increased exponentially. Likely you will graduate, earn significantly more money than non-reading peers, live independently.

The Impact of Reading Recovery on Classroom Practice

Student learning is improved not only for the few who have direct access to Reading Recovery. In addition, many students benefit as teachers trained in Reading Recovery return to classroom practice.

Three days in a district may not seem like a lot of time to understand the role that a specific intervention plays in the culture of schools. However, when an intervention is as pervasive as Reading Recovery in SD27, its impact is readily apparent. I spent three mornings visiting classrooms, LST rooms, and libraries. While I was noting the elements and strategies used by the teacher, my focus was on the words and actions of the children.

Years ago as a teacher-librarian working annually with hundreds of children and at least a dozen teachers, I learned that, year after year, a few teachers are “blessed with” engaged, inquisitive students who find reading and learning fun: these classes get excited when people read to them; they dig into books without being prompted; they have spontaneous conversations with each other about what they are reading; even in the primary grades, when they talk about their reading and writing, they use elevated vocabulary such as “goals,” “connections,” “purpose,” and “strategies.” They know what their teacher is reading. From a library perspective, I also learned that such classes tend to damage or lose a lot of books, but that they do very, very well on external assessments. Such classes seem to defy social geography, as they exist in inner city and “privileged” schools alike. They are not correlated to involved parents, or pre-school attendance, or clean socks.

In those years and schools, I also learned that there are many more classrooms full of children who read only because it’s silent reading time, or because they get stickers or points, or because it’s homework. A few children are excited to read, but most need lots of help when they come to the library. Their books come back weekly on the stamped due date. They have caring, responsible teachers who mark and plan and go to workshops, and who wish their students had been better prepared in September.

And, because I was often at the same school for several years, I saw those same classes blossom and fade from year to year, the pattern always the same regardless of which group of children they happened to be. Over time, I came to the conclusion that the single most important influence in turning a classroom into a community that reads books, discusses books, ranks books, shares books, writes books and, sometimes, helps themselves to others’ books simply because they love books, is the teacher.

My informal conclusions about the role of teachers in the developing literacy of students have since been corroborated by a growing body of research (Hill & Crevola, 2009). I brought a summary of that research to SD27 in the form of a rubric created by Peter Johnston (2015) that describes student action and conversation in engaged literacy classrooms. As I toured SD27’s schools with my research and this specific analytic, interviewing teachers and chatting with children, observing carpet time and independent reading, sitting on the sofa with a five year-old and talking with her about her book, patterns of student engagement began to emerge.

First, I noted the instructional practices seemed fairly consistent around the district: teachers for the most part are using some form of a “balanced literacy program” grounded in research. They use similar assessment tools.

My second observation was that I wasn’t seeing the talkative children, enthusiastic about stories, I would expect in classrooms characterized by such research-based literacy instruction. During carpet time, I saw teachers reading while well-behaved children looked at him or her. The teachers asked “on-the-line” literal comprehension questions; hands went up. In one classroom, when one small voice began to relate a “between-the-lines” personal tale in response to the book, the teacher reminded her to answer the question that had been asked, that her “too long” story would have to wait until later. Fewer hands went up after that, and the controlled reading and answering of basic questions continued. Generally, this story-reading activity continued for about 20 minutes.

A third conclusion was drawn during interviews: teachers were using authentic assessment practices but were limiting the power of those assessments by focusing on the student’s reading levels rather than on

the strategies within their control. While text levels are helpful in forming groups and choosing books for instruction and practice, the latter have the power to inform precision teaching.

Strictly speaking, teachers were implementing their balanced literacy programs, including the requisite Teacher Read-Aloud with high-level text. Students were basically well-managed. (This is commendable given the potential for primary children to create unfocused chaos!) However, the intended outcomes of this element of practice were not being met. Teachers knew the steps of the lesson but were missing a conceptualization of the over-riding purpose and potential of this strategy to ignite imagination, build community through shared personal stories, and push vocabulary and knowledge levels by drawing children into the book and facilitating curiosity and discussions about specific language and events in the book.

But this was not true everywhere and I began to notice exceptions. In one classroom, I perched on a tiny chair with my pen and paper to watch yet another class gathers on yet another carpet while listening to one more story. This time, however, differences were evident almost immediately.

This teacher was reading a “fat” book—clearly, they’d been reading this book for days. The action and description were rich with adjectives and details. Suddenly, a girl popped to her knees, “Oh! Oh! She’s addicting! She’s addicting!” The teacher stopped, “Tell us some more, Katelyn (not her real name). What are you thinking?” “Well, that music; it’s all in her head and she can’t escape! It’s like being addicting (sic).” “Yes, yes, yes!” interrupted the boy beside her, “I see what you mean. The music has trapped her, it’s swirling, and she doesn’t know what’s real!” “Yes!” answered the excited Katelyn, “it’s like I said. She’s addicting!” By now the group was abuzz as other students began to talk about Katelyn’s idea.

“What do the rest of you think?” asked the teacher. The buzz stopped. “What pictures did you see in your heads when I was reading? Turn to your partners and share one idea.” The buzz continued.

During the one minute that the children were talking, the teacher revealed her Interactive/Shared Writing sentence. It was drawn from the story, and children worked together to fill in the blanks, students sharing the felt pen with the teacher. This took 3 minutes.

Without a break in the action, the teacher next gave instructions for moving into small work groups. As all children would eventually be completing a science observation, she asked one student to demonstrate correct measurement and recording, including the placement of the zero on the ruler. He picked up his plant and his ruler and explained the nuances of stem measurement to the class. The first “bean group” was sent off to work. She then asked her Guided Reading group to go the rainbow table to read familiar books and “think about their fluency”, while she got a third group working on a writing task. As soon as that group was set, she moved to the group at the rainbow table, took a running record of one student’s oral reading, and gathered the rest for their Guided Reading lesson.

I had been in the class for only 20 minutes. The pace of instruction, the specificity of student and teacher conversation, and the constant engagement of the children were exemplary of Johnston’s list.

This class was not the last such experience. Over the course of three days, I experienced several such deeply engaged classrooms. In one, again at the carpet, the teacher announced that today the children were going to practice their coaching skills. She reviewed, step-by-step, the wait time and the prompts that children should use if their partner should get stuck on a word. She then called a student forward who demonstrated exactly these strategies. Students were sent off in pairs to read and coach, and then to discuss how well they had coached. At six years of age, these students were learning to do what I had learned as a forty year-old teacher!

Later, when I interviewed the teachers, I discovered that they were Reading Recovery-trained and had taught Reading Recovery for years. By lunch of Day Two, I had set a challenge for myself: By attending to

the engagement of the students, the level of vocabulary they used, and the quantity and sophistication of their writing visible on bulletin boards or in journals, would I be able to predict within 5 minutes of being in the classroom whether or not their teacher had had Reading Recovery training? Whether in Grade One or Kindergarten, I was able to do this with 100% accuracy.

Reading Recovery training, then, makes a profound difference to instruction and, hence, to student engagement and performance in the classroom. Given that Reading Recovery training does not address classroom instruction, I probed teachers during interviews to get at their mindsets during teaching and their habits with regard to professional learning. One classroom teacher explicated the instructional mindset:

Reading Recovery always puts it back on the teacher: all children are individuals; the child teaches you; the responsibility for knowing what the child needs rests with you. If the child's not getting it, what am I not doing? There are always things about that child that I can learn and that helps me look for new strategies that might be successful.

This type of approach empowers the teacher by removing from consideration all those influences over which the teacher has no control. The teacher is continually searching for the information that tells him or her what the child can do and what support is needed next.

Reading Recovery training also develops in teachers a complex mental model of learning. They fully understand the lived experience of scaffolding and gradual release, and they have a well-developed response mechanism for coaching students toward problem-solving. Their knowledge of reading behaviours and their significance to a child's literacy development is detailed. Most significantly, all of this knowledge appears to have been synthesized into a useful whole.

When it comes to professional development, then, their schema of instruction is sophisticated enough to absorb much new material. Rather than perceiving introduced strategies and approaches as "new", they are able to make sense of them quickly, attaching them to the prior knowledge gained in their Reading Recovery training and practice. While one teacher in the district decries, "I feel like I am constantly being guided this way and that way—making it cohesive is a challenge—there are so many different initiatives," another group is highly articulate about both their own and their students' learning. They do not see many different approaches as disconnected, but are able to integrate various approaches into their overall framework of literacy learning and instruction. They describe how inquiry through PLC's is not very different from the active inquiry involved coaching a student during a Reading Recovery lesson. They see the common theoretical principles informing both Daily 5 and balanced literacy structures. They are able to group students by text-level at times or by CAFÉ-type skills (**C**omprehension, **A**ccuracy, **F**luency, **E**xpanding vocabulary), at other times not arguing whether one is more effective than the other but, rather, choosing one over the other depending upon student need. They no longer argue whether reading should be taught holistically or through synthetic phonics. Rather, they acknowledge that any reading wars are over and it is up to them to know the strategies that their students need. I got the sense that they were empowered; they had moved beyond depending on others for solutions. Yes, they wanted more resources and more Reading Recovery, but they saw themselves as capable when faced with the learning needs of their students.

Reading Recovery teachers, then, display much of the "growth mindset" described by Dweck (2006). One's capacity to learn reading—or teaching, for that matter—is not innate. Rather it is developed through attentiveness and persistence. Believing that learning success is a result of effort, they simply do not give up. Are these teachers satisfied with capturing the "reading level" of a student as indicated through a running record of oral reading? No, they mine that record for every clue that might help them design a more effective lesson for that student, that might give insight into that best next step, that might help reveal the words to use in supporting the next bit of learning.

It is not surprising, then, that Reading Recovery trained teachers ask for training for more of their colleagues, and more time for people to work one-on-one with students. They have experienced its power in changing their own practices and learning behaviours, and want to help more students toward that same self-extending experience.

The Impact of Reading Recovery on Leadership

In many schools in the district, the Reading Recovery teacher has taken on the role of Literacy Leader. As such, he or she is helping teachers develop their assessment skills, learning to mine running records for much more than book level. They are helping teachers see the nature of powerful interactions and supporting them as they slowly adapt their practice to better scaffold learning. They support teachers in many other ways: One newly-appointed Kindergarten teacher says with relief that the Reading Recovery teacher is quietly coming into the room and taking a group of children every day; others mention that their Reading Recovery teacher is adding small group coaching in May and June; one reports that the Reading Recovery teacher is coming early and staying late to give two more students one-on-one support.

This commitment, empowerment and confidence of practice are seen in principals, as well. Just as teachers work to develop student control over the reading process, so principals trained in Reading Recovery work to develop teacher control over the teaching process. One principal describes how she allows time for teachers to complete their assessments at the beginning of the year and then meets with each of them to review results, discuss patterns of strengths and need among the students, and determine priorities for instructional planning. She then further uses that information to drive resource acquisitions, allocate EA time and other supports, and frame potential PLC inquiry questions. In her words, “everything I do is driven by the teachers’ assessment.” As further evidence of alignment, these schools are among the few to schedule transition meetings with their Kindergarten and StrongStart teachers.

Other teachers and principals are also caring, hard working, and disciplined. They know theory and practice. But that important mental model of what learning looks like and how all these pieces fit together to make that happen, and that very critical next, best step, seem much more elusive and enigmatic. In the words of one principal when asked whether assessments are making a difference to classroom practice, “I don’t think so!” but wasn’t exactly sure what to do about it.

Reading Recovery seems to build the confidence that allows students, teachers, and principals to keep struggling with the problems they encounter. By developing tools of assessment, a complex mental model of learning, ownership of the current situation, and an embodied belief that solutions are available with effort, Reading Recovery changes a potentially defeatist culture into one of independence and success.

What, then, are the caveats and confusions?

To put this discussion into context, it must be reiterated that every educator interviewed supports the existence of the Reading Recovery program for the reasons outlined above. Why, then, might some people question its efficacy in the Cariboo-Chilcotin? First, some people are not aware of the overwhelming body of research that supports the strength of Reading Recovery as both an intervention and a catalyst for improved classroom practice. These people may not be aware of the district data indicating the program’s success. More commonly, however, people do not understand its role within the school system.

As an illustration of this, seven people and several groups mentioned during interviews that they would like to see a different intake process. If Reading Recovery cannot be returned to its former 20% level or even increased, they would like to see a shift to focus from the “lowest of the low” to the “kids just up,” with the “lowest” students being given more time to develop and some other form of intervention.

Part of the confusion here rests in different understandings of the various roles Reading Recovery serves with different types of learners: (1) for some learners, it serves to catch them up, bringing them to the average of the class at which point they are “discontinued”; (2) for others, it serves as a pre-referral screening tool, indicating that they likely will have extreme difficulty learning to read and write and that some other intervention is needed. Going in, it is impossible to know which student falls into which of the two groups. Reading Recovery, then, is the first intervention when classroom instruction seems unlikely to bring the student to success. Why first? Because it is the intervention proven most likely to succeed with the widest range of learners. Why try something less likely to succeed with the most vulnerable students in the school? People who argue that some other intervention be tried first are arguing from the illogical position of suggesting the most needy students not be given the intervention most likely to succeed. Those who suggest a phonics-based approach first should be asked to cite the research. Yes, phonics-based approaches can be successful, but they are best applied to students already known to have significant, organically- rather than event-based reading difficulties.

Other concerns related to coverage. At this point, Reading Recovery is not available to students in some of the small rural schools. Teachers and principals throughout the district believe this to create inequity in opportunity and would like to see, at the very least, a Reading Recovery-trained teacher or principal in every school even if they cannot be allocated time to take individual students.

Summary

Reading Recovery is widely accepted in School District No. 27 as an effective intervention that changes the trajectory of learning for many students. In addition, it positively impacts classroom instruction and administrative practice. With that combination widely implemented, the school district should reach the point where 90% of first-graders are moving along a trajectory of literacy success.

Is Reading Recovery *the* answer for those with extreme difficulty learning to read and write? It is one answer, the first answer. When students are referred out, they leave with a high-quality profile of strengths and challenges, and a collection of strategies that are helping them. But further answers must be sought. Upon referral out of Reading Recovery, there should be no exclusions of practice; any and all practices whether or not they are popular bear consideration in the best interests of finding something that supports the child’s learning.

Oral Language Development in School District No. 27

Because children’s lack of oral language on entering school arises continually as a concern during interviews, and because oral language is so foundational to successful literacy acquisition, it bears extensive examination in any discussion of children with extreme difficulty learning to read and write. Again, this discussion needs to be contextualized by the following strengths:

- ✓ EDI shows significant improvement in the “Language and Cognitive Development” domain in many areas of the district;
- ✓ StrongStart facilitators work with parents to assess oral language and refer for further assessment and intervention;
- ✓ SLP’s assess all Kindergarten students for speech and language development. Baseline data is available for each child entering Grade One;
- ✓ Talking Tables is available as an intervention;
- ✓ Teachers are aware of the significance of oral language as foundational to all learning as well as to literacy acquisition;
- ✓ Teachers share concern that many children enter school with low levels of language.

Unlike StrongStart facilitators, Kindergarten teachers have little control over the Pre-K language experiences of their students. Some impact is felt from such programs as “Welcome to K.” Largely, however, the children come as they come! Given the significance of oral language as a foundation for learning, it is not surprising that many Kindergarten teachers wish that their students arrived at school with a lifetime of quality experiences in books and conversation.

The importance of Oral Language in Literacy Development

Experience and research tell us that students who start school with low levels of language are at extreme risk for difficulty with learning: the meaning and syntax connections necessary for comprehending the world in general and text in particular are just not there. The discrete sounds of the language may not be available to be connected to letters. The self-confidence that comes with being able to express feelings and ideas and needs in a new and perhaps disquieting setting puts the child at the disadvantage of not being understood. The cascading impact of low oral language on children entering kindergarten is well documented and profound (Justice, et al, 2013).

StrongStart and full-day Kindergarten have been implemented in BC as interventions to support the development of oral language, especially through involvement in hands-on play-based learning. When the day was lengthened, no outcomes were added to the curriculum; rather, the time to address existing outcomes was increased.

The documents accompanying this increase are clear:

“The purpose of full day Kindergarten is to enhance children’s overall development — not to rush them into academics at an earlier age...In some half day Kindergarten programs, play based exploration and inquiry have been displaced by educators who feel time-pressed in meeting curriculum outcomes, including the important focus on emerging literacy. This has meant diminished opportunities to address other areas of learning and development — such as social-emotional and physical development — that are key to success in school and life” (Full day Kindergarten Program Guide, 2010).

However, some of the above message appears to have been lost as the general push toward literacy acquisition in primary grades gained momentum. What appears to have been sacrificed in this push toward text is crucial, intentional oral language development. In conversations with all but 2 Kindergarten teachers, people did not mention oral language as an important goal, nor did they assess oral language development. When pressed for instructional and intervention practices, teachers add that struggling students go to the ELL teacher for Talking Tables. There is no mention of rhyming, chanting, reciprocal questioning, or focused conversations. No one talks, for example, about taking their children outside with umbrellas, stopping and listening, and then describing all the sounds of rain.

A silent focus on text

Rather, I saw children at stations matching magnetic letters to shapes of letters on paper, writing words, making letters with Play-Doh, independently paging through books. While these are all productive activities, what was disturbing was the silence. They weren’t talking to their partners about the feel of the Play-Doh, that “O” was round, “C” was open, and “Z” was crooked. Teachers asked questions during Read-Aloud time, but there was little experiential evidence that students were asking questions, too. House centres were either tucked away in corners or absent. Meaningful play—hard play—that includes problem-solving opportunities, that challenges skills and invites inquiry, that *requires* growing language ability was not evident in most classrooms.

Without intentional instruction in oral language throughout the Kindergarten year, especially with children teachers readily identify as entering school with low language skills, the building blocks for literacy—those vital cueing systems toward which teachers prompt their students while problem-solving textual challenges in the moment—are not likely to be robust by Grade One. Nor are they likely to

develop later in life. The education system has only a few years to attend to the neurological structures that support language development. “Certain ‘windows of opportunity’ for learning do exist. The brain’s ‘plasticity’ allows for greater amounts of information to be processed and absorbed at certain critical periods. For example, the critical period for learning a first language is lost by about age 10” (Sorgen, 1999).

Of particular concern are children of aboriginal heritage. For many, the images and experiences they meet at school are unfamiliar. What are they to talk about when they lack the vocabulary to connect with what they see around them? Classrooms need to include objects, images, and experiences that are familiar to children so that they can develop language by talking about what is known. This is why so many Kindergarten teachers include “Show and Tell” in their schedules: children get to talk about what they know. One short opportunity to share each month is insufficient, however. Intentionally including First People’s artifacts, books, photos, and stories, especially when upwards of 25% of the children in the class are aboriginal, is a reasonable strategy for helping children build language on what is known.

Summary

Analysis suggests that most people in the school district are operating from the assumption that children come to Kindergarten with a particular level of language and, when they don’t, that learning becomes the purview of specialists. This is an insufficient response. Intentional assessment and instruction in oral language must be a priority in Kindergarten and Grade One classrooms, much as it is in StrongStart Centres. Language-based and hands-on activities need to be integrated in Kindergarten in order for children to develop the robust neurological structures that support early literacy acquisition. In Grade One, an intentional push toward elevating the vocabulary of children needs to be addressed throughout the day. Particularly for children who are experiencing extreme difficulties with text, intentional oral language development is a requisite part of their primary program.

Systematizing Practice in School District No. 27

Again, this analysis needs to be situated in the evidence presented earlier in the report. Significant strides have been made in aligning practice across the district:

- ✓ StrongStart Centres share consistent assessment, instruction and referral practices;
- ✓ StrongStart facilitators meet regularly for professional discussions and learning;
- ✓ Most teachers in Kindergarten and Grade One are aligned in implementing some interpretation of a balanced literacy framework (from the perspective of someone working to bring this about at provincial and district levels for over twenty years, I recognize this as a great accomplishment);
- ✓ Many district practices and initiatives are consistent with that framework:
 - Literacy assessment practices (Observation Survey, PM Benchmarks, running records, School-wide Write),
 - The Reading Recovery intervention,
 - The Reading Strategies professional learning initiative,
 - Throughout the district, young children develop reading fluency by reading known books that they carry with them in personalized collections;
- ✓ In many schools, the principal, classroom teachers, LST, and Reading Recovery teachers work in collaboration with one another to align practice and support students;
- ✓ In many schools, Professional Learning Communities align assessment for learning practices.

The use of the word “alignment” when talking about assessment and instruction in schools has taken on the connotation of homogeneity. When practices follow dissimilar theories, or represent markedly

different approaches, they are sometimes considered unaligned. A study of systems, however, leads us to understand that the assimilation of diverse elements helps to increase resilience and flexibility within a system. We do not need elements in the system to be the same, nor even to agree; what we need is for them to understand how they fit together to inform and strengthen each other. Rather than talking about alignment, it is more helpful when dealing with complex structures such as schools to talk about systematization.

Resilient systems, systems that grow and learn in response to outside change, are characterized by at least five qualities (Simonsen, 2013; Davis & Sumara, 2008):

1. Redundancy: elements in the system have enough in common—structures, goals, beliefs, culture—that they share identity; the various parts of the system see themselves as being cohesive;
2. Diversity: new structures, goals, beliefs, cultural elements are added so that the system does not descend into complacency; the system does not become static;
3. Connectivity: common and diverse elements bump up against one another, challenging each other toward change, so the system constantly assimilates new information; outliers are included; feedback loops are planned and nourished; the system stays fresh;
4. Decentralized leadership: important decisions are made in-the-moment throughout the system so that response is nimble; feedback loops ensure the entire system is aware of decisions made at various levels so that those decisions can be assimilated into the system as a whole;
5. Boundaries: the system itself has enabling parameters—there’s no escape so elements must learn together; internal norms provide structures for negotiating change.

In School District No. 27, much is aligned and internally redundant, producing a characteristic district identity in early literacy classrooms: The organizing philosophy of socio-constructivism informs literacy practices and interventions, professional learning communities, and reading and writing assessment; most teachers use the same instructional framework and use common vocabulary when teaching; schools are beginning to acquire leveled aboriginal resources that support their guided reading programs; upper primary and intermediate classrooms are beginning to build their programs on the same frameworks used in primary.

However, the same cannot be said for systematization. Though StrongStart assessment practice is aligned with Kindergarten instructional practice, conversations between StrongStart facilitators and Kindergarten teachers are *ad hoc* and connectivity across the district is not present. Classroom teachers, Reading Recovery teachers, and LST’s continue to debate the value of various intervention strategies for children who have extreme difficulty learning to read and write. Systematization would bring this diversity into play, with different approaches meeting different needs at different times. While teachers’ classroom-based assessments may inform their practice, they have not, in most schools, been systematized to inform decentralized school-based decisions, let alone district decisions.

Response to Intervention as a systematizing structure

One structure that is helpful for systematizing literacy practices is a problem-solving version of what has come to be labeled, “Response to Intervention (RTI)”. The system itself revolves around a single organizing structure: teachers meet regularly with the sole purpose of discussing students who are experiencing challenges. They look at the performance of specific students, consider possible strategies, plan for instruction, and review results routinely. Here’s how it works:

Each teacher provides the most effective classroom learning experiences possible for every child. Despite this, one child does not progress. The teacher has tried everything s/he knows to support this student in learning to read. She takes work samples and, perhaps, a video to the bi-monthly RTI meeting and presents what she knows about the student, what she has tried, and what has happened as a result of those strategies. Teachers at the meeting analyze the information, discuss the situation, and suggest potential strategies. For two weeks (or a month, or two months, depending on the group’s decision), the

teacher tries those strategies and then returns to the meeting to report results. If progress has been made, the teacher continues with those strategies. If not, another level of support is designed: the LST may come to the class to spend one-on-one time with the child; a small amount of EA time may be assigned; exercises for home may be planned; a further teacher-based strategy might be suggested. Each of these might be labelled “Tier One” interventions; that is, they are the least intrusive interventions possible. Two weeks or a month later, the teacher returns to the RTI meeting with another report.

If the Tier One strategies do not sufficiently accelerate student learning, then Tier Two strategies might be planned. Such strategies involve greater adaptation of instruction. Reading Recovery and small group guided reading over and above regular guided reading sessions are examples of two such interventions. If Reading Recovery is chosen, then the Reading Recovery teacher brings a regular progress report to the RTI group. Again, suggestions are made, tried, and reviewed. At the end of the 12-20 weeks of Reading Recovery, the teacher reports back to the RTI group and recommendations are made for the continued support of this student. For children successfully “discontinued” at the reading level of their peers, those suggestions will be classroom and home based, back to Tier One. For the small percentage of students children who do not reach the level of their peers, suggestions might include more intensive intervention in a mode quite different from Reading Recovery: if the RTI group believes the child needs further language development, a referral might be made to the SLP for assessment; if it is clear that this child is struggling to access phonetic information, the LST might initiate a phonics-based program; this may be a time for assistive technology, or art lessons, or, of course, further intensive work with the Reading Recovery teacher. All options are open as this child enters a Tier Three intervention.

Because the RTI group meets on a regular basis, the level of intervention support may change regularly. So, a child may move from Tier One to Two, back to One, through Two, to Three, back to One, and so forth. All that this means is that the child is given different levels of support, using different strategies, depending on his or her progress. Assessment is ongoing and information is constantly flowing through the RTI group so that collaborative decisions are well-informed.

In this model, interventions previously seen as competing—holistic interventions such as Reading Recovery and atomistic interventions such as focused synthetic phonics—are re-conceptualized as elements in a system designed to meet diverse learning needs. Each has its place in the collective response of the school to a child’s learning profile. Because Reading Recovery is a broad-spectrum intervention—research has shown it meets a wide-range of needs—it is implemented as a Tier Two intervention. Discrete skill interventions such as focused, synthetic phonics instruction are reserved for Tier Three, and then only for children whom the RTI group sees as benefiting from such an approach.

Transition Meetings as a systematizing structure

The careful scheduling of transition meetings is an easy way to ensure that the information about a child gained by one teacher is transferred to that child’s next teacher. If the principal participates, that information becomes available for school-based decisions. What becomes apparent in interviews, however, is that the information gained by StrongStart facilitators is not systematically transferred to either the principal or the Kindergarten teacher, especially when the StrongStart Centre is hosted in a different school. Scheduling these meetings should be an easy fix.

Principal-Teacher review of assessments as a systematizing structure

In a few schools, principals meet regularly with teachers to discuss student results. They look at the strengths and needs of individual students, as well as patterns of achievement demonstrated by the class. Teachers then plan for instruction based on this review while the principal collates this information from around the school, analyzes it, and uses it to inform purchases, support allocations, and professional learning design. This happens at the beginning of the year as well as at the beginning of each term.

A further step would be for principals to bring such information to district-level meetings. Talking with colleagues about potential solutions to ongoing learning challenges in their school would broaden the

base of ownership for such challenges across the district. Collaborative problem-solving could broaden the range of potential strategies and solutions.

Summary

In systematizing interventions, transitions, and the information gained through assessments, the school district as a whole responds to individual student learning through subtle, almost imperceptible shifts. The teachers directly impacting the student make large shifts in practice; the principal makes other shifts that support the teacher and the parents; other principals make time in their day to provide advice; the school district alters its budget to redirect funds toward resources. When information and decision-making are systematized, each of these decisions is informed by student achievement and the district effectively directs its energies to address student needs.

D. Plan: recommending changes in practice

In summary of the findings and analysis above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Develop deep connections with StrongStart:
 - Schedule transition meetings that include StrongStart facilitators, Kindergarten teachers, LST's and principals;
 - Include StrongStart students, parents, and facilitators in school assemblies and celebrations whenever possible;
 - Examine the communications issues between the CDC and StrongStart.
2. Encourage schools to examine their oral language assessment and instruction practices carefully:
 - Ensure that SLP screen information is shared with and understood by Kindergarten teachers. This may involve a training session for K teachers in which aspects and implications of the screen are explained. It may involve consultation meetings between individual K teachers and SLP's. Those teachers with strong links to the SLP's find their reports very helpful. SLP's currently do not have time to give that type of attention to all K teachers. Some form of communication channels need to be worked out to resolve this problem.
 - Work with the Kindergarten Oral Language Continuum (Appendix B) to describe strengths and gaps in oral language development. Then, strengthen classroom strategies for addressing them through ongoing opportunities to explore play-based learning, oral language development, and pre-literacy assessment. Kindergarten, Grade One, Reading Recovery and Learning Support teachers all need to acknowledge that, while letter knowledge is important, its application is contingent upon oral language. Therefore, oral language development must be strengthened through intentional assessment and instruction.
 - Introduce First People's resources such as "Moe the Mouse" (currently stored in some of the StrongStart Centres) to facilitate conversations in the classroom.
3. Build on the positive impact of Reading Recovery and the PLC model:
 - Invite schools to explore the potential of the RTI model for systematizing their assessment and intervention practices. If the RTI model is already in place in schools, use the PLC structure to examine ways of tightening it;

- Continue the dogged work of teaching teachers to use their literacy assessments powerfully. Schedule school-based running record meetings and include the principal in that meeting. All primary educators need to know that levels assessment has limited use if a student's control over strategies remains invisible;
 - Continue to offer "Learning Rounds" in demonstration classrooms with teachers who are trained in Reading Recovery. Analyze teacher use of language carefully. Teach the indicators of student engagement so that teachers can observe for this in the demonstration lessons as well as in their own classrooms. Include teachers who participate in these Learning Rounds in a book study of *Opening Minds: using language to change lives* (Johnston, 2012);
 - Explore ways of extending Reading Recovery to more schools, particularly those in rural schools with small populations.
4. Ask principals to bring an analysis of student learning—strengths and challenges based on assessment—to principals' meetings at least once per year. Use this information to plan future meetings.
 5. Significantly increase the number of First People's guided reading books available in classrooms and book rooms so that all students become familiar with aboriginal stories, content, and images.
 6. Gather some evidence of student learning at the district level. Districts have found that gathering PM Benchmark levels is destructive to the deeper purpose of using that assessment to inform instruction. Though it is tempting to collect data already in use, avoid it! Rather, collect something less onerous, simple, similar to the Provincial Snapshot (Appendix C) used to track student progress in *Changing Results for Young Readers*. This helps give some indication of whether the system is working for all children, and whether particular areas need further investigation. This also would help answer questions about assessment "coverage"—are all students or only some being assessed—as all students on the classlist are included in the Snapshot.

E. Conclusion

People throughout School District No. 27 continue to work hard to implement a cohesive plan that addresses the learning needs of all children. Attention to assessment and planning is evident. The long-term commitment to intervention for those students experiencing extreme difficulty is to be commended, as are efforts to align classroom instruction, assessment, and intervention. So much of what has been started is "almost there."

What is needed now is for the whole district to shift itself slightly, to re-organize thinking and structures so that all elements of practice are working more effectively with reference to one another in supporting the best interests of students. It is my hope that the report and recommendations above both affirm and challenge the educators of the Cariboo-Chilcotin as they engage in that process.

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G. Appendices

- A. Peter Johnston handout
- B. Kindergarten Oral Language Continuum
- C. Provincial Snapshot example

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shaping schools and classrooms for diverse learners

THIS IS NOT A CHECKLIST!!

Some Things You Might Observe Engaged Students Doing/Saying:

a. Teacher directed lesson:

- Being attentive
- Taking the initiative to ask questions or comment
- Providing extended responses
- Responding clearly and confidently
- Taking time to think before answering a teacher question
- Helping each other and building on questions and answers, by questioning or extending other students' contributions rather than competing for the 'right' answer
- Providing the logic of their responses
- Articulating strategies

b. Class discussions/problem-solving: c. Small group collaborations:

- Engaging in the task
- Listening to each other —mutually engaged
- Interacting directly with each other rather than just through the teacher
- Providing extended explanations (say, longer than 10 seconds)
- Providing reasoning ('because' 'so'...)
- Building on each other's contributions
- Providing different perspectives/strategies, disagreeing/challenging
- Using extending language like: I wonder, perhaps, I think, I agree/disagree with you because/and, What do you mean? I'm confused, What are you thinking?
- Participating equally
- Talking about talk e.g. monitoring for collective participation ('we haven't heard from Bill yet') and use of explanation ('you need to say why', etc.)
- Using language of the discipline
- Distributing and coordinating roles, responsibilities and resources (e.g. using each other as resources e.g. to cross check)

d. Working independently:

- Engaging in the task
- Asking for, and giving, assistance

e. Formative feedback sessions:

- Participants appear to have a shared sense that the task is to improve the product/idea
- The object and its producer are treated with respect
- The person receiving feedback is listening closely and responding, e.g. asking questions for clarification
- The one/s receiving feedback clarify in advance what they want to know
- The one's giving feedback offer reasons for any suggestions
- The language directs attention to the product/idea not the person (when feedback is received it isn't taken personally)
- The language of the feedback is constructive — offers a concrete problem to solve and perhaps a concrete strategy to solve it —
- Feedback identifies specifically what is working well
- Feedback is cast in terms of perspective and possibility ('I was confused by...' 'have you thought about...' 'maybe you could...')
- The receiver of feedback leaves the exchange with a sense of what to do and the motive/intention to do it

Kindergarten Emergent Literacy Continuum: Oral Language

Developmental aspects	Emerging With direct support...	Developing With guided support...	Applying With minimal support...	Extending
The Child	With direct support may listen to and use language for play and collaborative learning. May not have enough language for conversation to be meaningful.	With guided support listens to and is beginning to use language for play and collaborative learning. Is beginning to participate in conversations.	With minimal support uses conventional language for play and collaborative learning. Is able to contribute to conversations.	Adjusts language use for play and collaborative learning. Uses language for a range of purposes and actively contributes to conversations.
Speaking and Listening				
Attending	With direct support may attend to informal oral language interactions.	With guided support attends to and participates in informal language interactions.	With minimal support attends to and participates in informal language interactions.	Attends to and participates in informal language interactions.
Listening	With direct support may listen during activities (e.g., ignoring distractions).	With guided support listens during activities (e.g., ignoring distractions).	With minimal support listens during activities (e.g., ignoring distractions).	Listens during activities (e.g., ignoring distractions).
Speaking	With direct support may speak with adults or peers. May be difficult to understand (e.g., tone of voice, volume, articulation, rate, gesture).	With guided support speaks with adults and peers (e.g., tone of voice, volume, articulation, rate, gesture).	With minimal support speaks clearly and fluently with adults and peers (e.g., tone of voice, volume, articulation, rate, gesture).	Speaks clearly and fluently using appropriate voice and body language (e.g., tone of voice, volume, articulation, rate, gesture).
Taking turns in conversation	With direct support may take turns in a conversation.	With guided support takes turns in a conversation.	With minimal support takes turns in a conversation.	Takes turns as a thoughtful listener and speaker in a conversation.
Staying on topic	With direct support may sometimes stay on topic in a short conversation.	With guided support stays on topic in a short conversation; responds to ideas.	With minimal support stays on topic in a conversation; responds to and extends ideas.	Stays on topic in conversations; responds to and extends ideas.
Knowledge of the Content and Structure of Language				
Understanding and participating in language activities	With direct support may understand classroom language activities (e.g., shared reading, role plays, imaginative play, etc.).	With guided support understands and participates in classroom language activities (e.g., shared reading, role plays, imaginative play, etc.).	With minimal support understands and participates in classroom language activities (e.g., shared reading, role plays, imaginative play, etc.).	Understands and actively participates in classroom language activities (e.g., shared reading, role plays, imaginative play, etc.).
Understanding vocabulary	With direct support may understand a limited vocabulary.	With guided support understands a basic vocabulary.	With minimal support understands a wide vocabulary.	Understands an extensive vocabulary.
Speaking in sentences	With direct support may use single words or short phrases modeled by others.	With guided support uses words or phrases modeled by others.	With minimal support expresses thoughts and ideas in short sentences.	Expresses thoughts and ideas in some detail using a variety of sentences.
Understanding and following directions	With direct support may follow directions.	With guided support follows directions.	With minimal support follows directions.	Follows directions.
Understanding, asking and responding to questions	With direct support may understand the difference between a question and a comment or response.	With guided support understands questions; asks simple questions and may respond on topic.	With minimal support asks and answers questions on topic.	Asks thoughtful questions; responds on topic and extends ideas.
Sharing personal experiences	With direct support may share personal experiences and feelings.	With guided support shares personal experiences and feelings.	With minimal support shares personal experiences and feelings with some clarity.	Shares personal experiences and feelings with clarity; is beginning to adjust language for audience.
Retelling/recounting	With direct support may retell something about a story; may recount part of an experience or give one or two simple facts.	With guided support retells a simple story, recounts an experience or gives new information; some sequence errors and omissions.	With minimal support retells a story, recounts an experience or gives new information; may use simple connectors (e.g., and, then).	Retells a story, recounts experiences or gives information; uses more complex connectors (e.g., if, because, when, before, etc.).
Problem solving	With direct support may use language to problem solve.	With guided support uses language to problem solve.	With minimal support uses language to problem solve.	Without support uses appropriate language to problem solve.
Knowledge of the Sounds of Language				
Demonstrating phonological awareness	With direct support may demonstrate emergent skills in a few phonological awareness areas (e.g., awareness of words, syllables, sounds, rhyme).	With guided support demonstrates emergent skills in a few phonological awareness areas (e.g., awareness of words, syllables, sounds, rhyme).	With minimal support demonstrates emergent skills in some phonological awareness areas (e.g., awareness of words, syllables, sounds, rhyme).	Demonstrates emergent skills in most phonological awareness areas (e.g., awareness of words, syllables, sounds, rhyme).
The Support/Scaffolding*	The Model: showing, instructing, explaining, directing, making explicit, demonstrating, giving examples	The Coach: structuring, sequencing, focusing, cueing, guiding, organizing, supporting	The Advisor: suggesting, reminding, prompting, monitoring, asking for elaboration	The Mentor: extending, stretching, wondering aloud, exploring, "what if-ing"
*a variety of supports (teachers, peers, environmental, etc.) can be provided at any stage of development				

Date code:

Comments:

Final 03/09

Provincial Snapshot: Changing Results for Young Readers

Kindergarten Oral Language

Please complete the following table for all Kindergarten students in the area of Oral Language using the BC Kindergarten Continua (below). Use one form for each class of Kindergarten students.

With direct support may listen to and use language for play and collaborative learning. May not have enough language for conversation to be meaningful.

With guided support listens to and is beginning to use language for play and collaborative learning. Is beginning to participate in conversations.

With minimal support uses conventional language for play and collaborative learning. Is able to contribute to conversations.

Without support adjusts language use for play and collaborative learning. Uses language for a range of purposes and actively contributes to conversations.

School District Number: _____

	GENDER	Direct Support	Guided Support	Minimal Support	Without Support
1	M/F				
2	M/F				
3	M/F				
4	M/F				
5	M/F				
6	M/F				
7	M/F				
8	M/F				
9	M/F				
10	M/F				
11	M/F				
12	M/F				
13	M/F				
14	M/F				
15	M/F				
16	M/F				
17	M/F				
18	M/F				
19	M/F				
20	M/F				
21	M/F				
22	M/F				

Provincial Snapshot: Changing Results for Young Readers

Grade 1 Reading

Please complete the following table for all Grade 1 students in the area of Reading using the Grade 1 BC Reading Standards (below). Use one form for each class of Grade 1 students.

Not yet – Reading like behaviour **and understanding**. The student may engage in reading-like behaviour, but relies on an adult or peer to read stories or other selections. (Not yet within expectations)

Minimum – Some support **and some understanding** The student reads short, simple illustrated selections with some support; may be able to reread familiar selections independently. (Meets expectations, minimum level)

Maximum – Independently, **with understanding**. The student reads short, simple illustrated selections; re-reads familiar selections independently. (Fully meets expectations)

Exceeds – Support, **shows understanding**. The student reads a variety of short, simple materials independently; often chooses to read; needs little support. (Exceeds expectations)

School District Number: _____

	GENDER	Not yet within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimum Level)	Full meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
1	M/F				
2	M/F				
3	M/F				
4	M/F				
5	M/F				
6	M/F				
7	M/F				
8	M/F				
9	M/F				
10	M/F				
11	M/F				
12	M/F				
13	M/F				
14	M/F				
15	M/F				
16	M/F				
17	M/F				
18	M/F				
19	M/F				
20	M/F				
21	M/F				
22	M/F				

Provincial Snapshot: Changing Results for Young Readers

Grade 2 Reading

Please complete the following table for all Grade 2 students in the area of Reading using the Grade 2 BC Reading Standards (below). Use one form for each class of Grade 2 students.

The student needs **one-to-one support** to read short, simple stories and to attempt comprehension activities. (Not yet within expectations)

The student reads a variety of short, simple stories with understanding if given **some support**. Work is partially accurate. (Meets expectations, minimum level)

The student reads a variety of short, **simple stories independently** and with understanding. Work is generally accurate. (Fully meets expectations)

The student reads an increasing variety of simple stories **independently** and with understanding. Work is clear, accurate, complete. (Exceeds expectations)

School District Number: _____

	GENDER	Not yet within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimum Level)	Full meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
1	M/F				
2	M/F				
3	M/F				
4	M/F				
5	M/F				
6	M/F				
7	M/F				
8	M/F				
9	M/F				
10	M/F				
11	M/F				
12	M/F				
13	M/F				
14	M/F				
15	M/F				
16	M/F				
17	M/F				
18	M/F				
19	M/F				
20	M/F				
21	M/F				
22	M/F				

Provincial Snapshot: Changing Results for Young Readers

Grade 3 Reading

Please complete the following table for all Grade 3 students in the area of Reading using the Grade 3 BC Reading Standards (below). Use one form for each class of Grade 3 students.

The student may be able to read and recall simple, short selections with familiar language. Often needs **one-to-one support** for both reading and comprehension activities. (Not yet within expectations)

The student is able to read simple, direct fiction and poetry, and complete basic comprehension and response tasks with **some support**. Work often lacks detail. (Meets expectations, minimum level)

The student is able to read **simple, direct fiction and poetry**, and complete comprehension or response activities independently. Work is accurate and complete. (Fully meets expectations)

The student is able to read materials that have **some complexity**, and complete comprehension or response activities independently. Work often shows **insight or exceeds requirements** of the task. (Exceeds expectations)

School District Number: _____

	GENDER	Not yet within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimum Level)	Fully meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
1	M/F				
2	M/F				
3	M/F				
4	M/F				
5	M/F				
6	M/F				
7	M/F				
8	M/F				
9	M/F				
10	M/F				
11	M/F				
12	M/F				
13	M/F				
14	M/F				
15	M/F				
16	M/F				
17	M/F				
18	M/F				
19	M/F				
20	M/F				
21	M/F				
22	M/F				

*ELL is defined as any student whose use of English is sufficiently different from standard Canadian English

Provincial Snapshot

Changing Results for Young Readers

Fall 2014

School District Summary: SD #: _____

GRADE	Gender	Not yet within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimum Level)	Fully meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
1	M				
	F				
2	M				
	F				
3	M				
	F				

Kindergarten Oral Language	Gender	Direct Support	Guided Support	Minimal Support	Without Support
K	M				
	F				

Provincial Snapshot

Changing Results for Young Readers

Fall 2014

Classroom Teacher Summary: SD #: _____

GRADE	Gender	Not yet within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimum Level)	Fully meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
1	M				
	F				
2	M				
	F				
3	M				
	F				

Kindergarten Oral Language	Gender	Direct Support	Guided Support	Minimal Support	Without Support
K	M				
	F				

*ELL is defined as any student whose use of English is sufficiently different from standard Canadian English