

Utah Spotlight: Inspiring Educators

July 2021

Disrupting the Trend *Increasing early reading proficiency*

Looking back at the last seven years of early reading data, Mountain View Elementary School had historically seen the percentage of students being proficient decrease from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. For example, decreases averaged between 6% and 9% less students being proficient from the beginning to end of the year in first and second grades which are critical years in building a strong foundation in literacy. Additionally, in the Spring of 2020, Mountain View was identified as a TSI school in three areas: students with disabilities, students with limited income, and students who identified as Hispanic.

When Principal Heidi Jo West brought this trend data and TSI status information to the Mountain View leadership team, they wanted better for their students. The faculty collaborated to identify what it was going to take to help each student achieve grade level expectations. In order to accomplish this, the grade level teams with the support of their literacy coach, Eva Tyger, met weekly to look at individual student data and evaluate the impact of their instruction. The staff progress monitored students at the frequency recommended by research (intensive students: weekly; strategic students: every two weeks; benchmark students: monthly; and above benchmark students: every quarter).

Using the progress monitoring data, they were able to understand how the student's response to instruction, core and intervention, and made time sensitive adjustments as necessary. If they found the intervention was not working as effectively as desired, they would increase the frequency, duration, intensity, change the curriculum, or the instructor delivering the intervention. This hyper focus on using data to make instructional adjustments led to significantly increased outcomes in student proficiency.

"Every employee in our building cares about each and every one of our students and want to make a difference in their lives. Our teachers, counselor, coach, and staff have shown that they will stop at nothing to ensure that our Title I students, who may have hard home lives or are experiencing trauma, have every opportunity to learn at high levels." -Principal, Heidi Jo West



Mountain View Elementary *Box Elder SD*

Principal: Heidi Jo West



School Demographics

Total Enrollment: 359 students

- 49% of students with limited income
- 3% of students learning English
- 16% of students with a disability

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An academic focus was only part of their success. Teachers also were asked about their relationships and connections with students. Paraprofessionals, custodians, kitchen staff and the secretary all contribute to the positive atmosphere at Mountain View and expand student connections. Teachers recognized that without strong relationships in the school, student success would be limited. The staff identified specific strategies for increasing their attention to the whole child:

- 1) **Acknowledgement:** To encourage students who weren't showing progress, teachers submitted weekly announcements to identify students as Super 'Stangs as a way of highlighting students with accolades and encouragement.
- 2) **Home Visits:** Teachers visited the homes of students and developed stronger relationships with both the student and their families.

- 3) **Parent Conferences:** Teachers ensured parents knew how their child was performing and provided them with strategies for ways they could support at home.
- 4) **Lunch Time:** Teachers invited students in to have lunch with them and a friend of their choosing.
- 5) **Increasing Positive Interactions.** Staff sought ways to praise before correcting students, making phone calls home, and showing a genuine interest in students as individuals

These five strategies indicate the effort Mountain View teachers made to strengthen relationships with the students and families they were most concerned about. Through strengthening relationships students felt valued, part of the learning community, knew their teacher wanted them to be successful and cared about them as a person which helped to accelerate their learning.



End of Year Results

During the 2020-2021 school year, through the dedicated efforts of the Mountain View staff, the school disrupted the trend. In each grade level, K-5, they achieved double digit gains in the percentage of students proficient at the end of the year benchmark. The range of proficiency increase varied from 10-34% with the average being a 17% increase schoolwide.

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5
BOY	67%	36%	51%	58%	59%	49%
EOY	80%	70%	61%	80%	70%	58%
% increase	13%	34%	10%	22%	11%	11%

Similarly, every grade in the school surpassed the state's expectation for 60% of students making typical or better progress. The percentage of students making typical or better progress was between 71-85% with some teachers achieving 100% of their students making typical or better progress.

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5
% growth	81%	77%	71%	71%	85%	75%

When asked how the school experienced such great success, the principal gave all the credit to her teachers. Heidi Jo believes that the valiant efforts of her staff to ensure that all students learned at high levels and their unceasing belief that they had the ability to increase student achievement changed the school's narrative. The educators at Mountain View are excited for students to return in the fall and continue to advance their students' opportunities through a quality education.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Several aspects of the evidence-based actions taken by the staff at Mountain View led to this success story including:

- 1) **Collective Teacher Efficacy** (Effect Size 1.57) and **Response to Instruction** (Effect Size 1.29). Teachers and the literacy coach collaborated weekly to analyze student data, determine adjustments, and understand the impact of their instruction.
- 2) **Frequent Feedback and Recognition** (Effect Size 0.70). By recognizing students, building strong relationships, and celebrating their progress, students felt valued, knew where they were, and where they needed to go.
- 3) **Appropriately Challenging Goals** (Effect Size 0.59). By monitoring students frequently along the way and establishing goals based on evidence-based norms, teachers set ambitious, yet realistic goals for their students to achieve and provide the support to achieve those goals. They were also able to make timely adjustments to their instructional plans as they had the data to inform them of the effectiveness of the intervention.
- 4) **Positive Self-Concept** (Effect Size 0.41). As the school attended to both academics and the social emotional needs of the student, they fostered the development of improved positive self-concept for their students. The students started to see success and attributed that to their effort which bred more success. Success breeds success!

The goal of the Utah Spotlight is to offer Utah educators inspiring stories of educational strategies that impact student learning in dramatic ways, and importantly, designed to encourage and support educators in enriching their own practice. It is an opportunity to shine a light on inspiring and engaging practices in education with ideas worth spreading.