

A Dyslexia Initiative: One Community's Model of Change

PRESENTERS

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BACKGROUND

PC READS began advocating for systemic changes to the Park City School District's (PCSD) reading program in 2014, aware of the complexities of reading instruction and believing that teachers wanted and needed more training, support and resources to increase reading success. In 2015, PCSD began evaluating their English Language Arts curriculum, concerned about students' reading performance.

Why was instruction not having the impact desired?

Answering this question led to the development of the 2016 Dyslexia Initiative.

GOALS

- Provide effective reading instruction for all students
- Increase awareness of the reading impediments dyslexic students encounter
- Better ensure all struggling readers are identified early and receive appropriate interventions

FUNDING

Funding for the Dyslexia Initiative was provided through a ground breaking public-private partnership between the Park City Education Foundation (PCEF), the Hall Family Fund and the Park City School District. PCEF's mission is to fund initiatives that inspire all Park City students to successfully reach their academic and life-long potential. The Hall Family Fund is a family passionate about providing early identification and intervention for dyslexic children.



PC READS TODAY

Professional Development Grants

A rolling grant program offers educators financial support for professional development.

Advocate Program

Certified Dyslexia Advocates provide personalized assistance to families, including reviewing and revising IEP goals and 504 Accommodation Plans.

MIND Youth Program

Educational programs and social activities are designed for K-12 students with learning differences to improve self-advocacy skills and build self-esteem.

Dyslexia Awareness Presentations

Presentations for schools and organizations are tailored to their interests and needs and can include a dyslexia simulation.

Special Events

PC READS hosts national and local experts, organizes fundraising events and presents an annual *Elevating Literacy Award*.

PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT TODAY

All students benefit from engaging in systematic, explicit phonics instruction regardless of reading ability.

- All Kindergarten, First, Second, & Third grade students are given access to Wilson Foundations*
- Students identified as needing additional support now have access to Tier III interventions aligned with Tier I & Tier II instruction

PCSD Teachers deliver Tier I & Tier II foundational skills instruction through the use of structured language resources.

- Teachers, Interventionists, and Special Education Teachers receive training in Wilson Foundations*, Wilson Just Words*, Wilson Reading Systems*, and/or IMSE Orton Gillingham methodologies
- Heavy emphasis is placed on utilizing research and resources from David A. Kilpatrick and Heggerty by Literacy Resources, Inc.

PCSD Teachers have gained more confidence in identifying appropriate reinforcements when students struggle with reading, with better grade level collaboration and problem solving.

- Consistent universal screeners, diagnostic assessments, curriculum based measures, and progress monitoring data are analyzed by school leadership teams and teachers
- A *Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Elementary Literacy Guidebook* has been drafted

PARK CITY READS (PC READS)

Mission: Recognizing, Educating & Advocating for Dyslexic Students

PC READS is a nonprofit organization located in Park City, Utah which advocates for recognition and education of dyslexic students. PC READS promotes elevating literacy through early identification of struggling readers, effective reading interventions and appropriate classroom accommodations. Resources and support are provided to families with struggling readers, particularly those identified as dyslexic, enabling students to reach their full potential.



EDUCATED

Ourselves & Our Community

- Attended conferences
- Read books & articles
- Completed advocacy courses
- Used media outlets
- Built a website
- Hosted special events

Lesson Learned: Recognize that you may have more knowledge than others and learn how to impart information without condescension.

COLLABORATED

Built a Professional Network

- Partnered with local businesses on events
- Developed lists of professional resources
- Co-hosted events with other organizations
- Provided Dyslexia Awareness Presentations
- Offered professional development to educators
- Sought out local grant opportunities

Lesson Learned: Developing partnerships and a network of local supporters assists with building school district relationships.

ADVOCATED

For Change at School and District Levels

- Met with teachers & district leadership
- Spoke at board meetings
- Gathered personal stories
- Supported a network of families
- Wrote articles for local publications

Lesson Learned: Practices and policies may differ at schools within the same district; informed advocacy is needed to effect change.

PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT (PCSD)

Recognized as one of the country's premiere districts, PCSD has nearly 5,000 students and is home to four elementary schools (preschool to grade 5); one middle school (grades 6-7); one junior high (grades 8-9); and one high school (grades 10-12). Starting in first grade, students have access to dual immersion programs in Spanish and French. PCSD has a 95% graduation rate, which is in the top 1 percent of the nation.

PCSD has received numerous accolades including:

- "Best School District in Utah" by *Niche* in 2020
- "Best School District in Utah" by *Business Insider* in January 2018
- Park City High School was one of only three Utah high schools to earn a gold medal in the *U.S. News & World Report's* 2017 rankings
- Park City High School was named the "Best Public High School in Utah" by *USA Today* in 2017



BUILT CAPACITY

Capitalized on Research Findings

- Communicated **why** changes in reading instruction were necessary
- Worked within A Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework
- Provided ongoing professional learning specific to reading acquisition

Lesson Learned: Do not underestimate the time it takes to shift mindsets.

CREATED ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Adjusted Infrastructure

- Began with a pilot to show vision was attainable before expanding
- Established communication channels with consistent messaging
- Motivated educators and monitored implementation
- Defined leadership and educator roles

Lesson Learned: School leadership engagement is essential.

CONCLUSION

PCSD believes that by continuing to focus efforts and resources on the goals stated above, we will take great strides toward closing the achievement gap. Consistent, high quality instruction in all grade levels will decrease the number of students needing support beyond Tier II. Implementing a process, with decision-making and problem solving, will help to maximize student success and increase the likelihood of sustaining successful programs and strategies. Finally, building an infrastructure with systems of support, allows the school district to replicate success with upcoming implementations.