

Feb. 23, 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this testimony in support of the 3-3 literacy initiative. I have been a teacher for 30 years and a literacy coach and literacy consultant for the past seven years. I am dedicated to learning, both for myself, my students, and my fellow teachers. Over the past seven years, I have been attending Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project summer institutes at Columbia University and have put those experiences into practice in my own classroom and throughout my school and district.

I especially want to talk about how our school has worked hard to provide a consistent, effective, research-based, approach to literacy. When I started here at Hallman, seven years ago, Hallman Elementary was the lowest performing elementary school in the state of Oregon. We were, and still are, the lowest socioeconomic school, with the highest amount of free and reduced lunch students, highest mobility rate, and highest English language learner rate in the state. We had a high mobility rate for teachers as well, new teachers were placed here and they left as soon as they were able to. We had a high turnover for principals, in fact the only real consistency at Hallman was our inconsistency. We switched literacy programs as well. We tried Reading First, Success for All, and Scott Foresman Reading Street. But still, our test scores plummeted, teacher and student morale was low, and students did not view themselves as readers.

We received a SIG grant, and with that came a huge opportunity. Two literacy coaches were brought here and our job was to create a learning environment where students and teachers viewed themselves as readers and writers. We decided early on, that our money and literacy focus would be on professional development, rather than a purchased curriculum. We all attended Teacher's College summer institutes, at Columbia University in New York, we purchased classroom libraries, filled with books that students wanted to read, we met as teachers regularly to develop curriculum maps and plans, we observed each other as we taught, our literacy coaches met with teachers regularly to provide support in planning, modeling, coteaching, and debriefing.

It is my strong belief that this consistency, using highly effective literacy foundations and pedagogy, coupled with ongoing and consistent professional development, helped us move out of school improvement status, improved our school focus and beliefs about student achievement, improved our test scores, and most importantly gave our students the skills and determination they needed to view themselves as readers and writers. These literacy practices were put into place across our school, not just in specific classrooms, which is crucial in providing consistency and vertical articulation across an entire school.

We also created a school-wide intervention plan, to help those students who were more than one year below grade level in reading or math. We provide before and after school interventions, as well as in-classroom interventions. We have watched our reading data change over the past three years, from more than two-thirds of our students needing tier two and three interventions, to a pyramid where two thirds of our students are within one year of grade level.

I realize that this is a snapshot of what one school, in one school district can achieve. But I believe that the core principles are the same on a much larger scale. The 3 to 3 literacy initiative provides for consistent, effective, and aligned literacy practices, coupled with ongoing, dynamic, professional development, an emphasis on creating strong teachers with a focused literacy vision, and a strong intervention school-wide, can create the changes in education that need to happen in order to reach the rigor of the new Common Core State Standards. I fully support SB 214.

Amy Tipelin

Hallman Elementary Literacy Coach/Teacher