



BIG HORN COUNTY NEWS

BY GARY ROOD / BIG HORN COUNTY NEWS (HARDIN, MT)
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Reading scores at Lodge Grass Elementary School are increasing across the board following the implementation of a new curriculum by the staff. As measured via “ability level points” from the Office of Public Instruction, some children have managed to double their reading comprehension from August 2017 to March, according to IStations Indicators of Progress tests.



Photo by Gary Rood

Lodge Grass third graders spend time reading on Monday morning. Since August 2017, some students have doubled their reading comprehension according to IStations Indicators of Progress tests.

“We are showing improvement consistently from month to month to month,” Lodge Grass Principal Melanie Ferguson said. “We had a literacy team come through from the Office of Public Instruction and they were very impressed.”

OPI test results are divided into three tiers that go up as grade levels progress – Tier 1 is above average, Tier 2 is average and Tier 3 is below average. Kindergarteners began with a Tier 2 baseline that went from 170 to 190 skill points from August 2017 to January. By the time students reached sixth grade, they needed scores above 1,800 skill level points to stay in Tier 2.

The school’s sixth grade class has improved by a combined amount of 401 ability points from beginning scores in the early 1,700 to the early 2,000 range. According to sixth grade teacher Amy Hanson, this translates to more than 60 percent of her class reading at or above grade level – back in August, the average was about 25 percent. Five of her 15 students, she continued, are reading above an eighth grade level.

Indicators of Progress tests, according to an IStation technical report, provide “teachers and other school personnel with easy-to-interpret, web-based reports that detail student strengths and deficits and provide links to teaching resources.”

According to an email from the Ferguson, the IStation reading curriculum implements science and social studies lessons into the students’ daily schedule. Reading lessons, the email continues, “work like a video game.”

For the morning reading time, students are split up based on their various skill levels. Students may work independently, in groups or with the teachers themselves. As part of their “strategic...delivery of literacy instruction,” Ferguson states, classrooms have a 90-minute block

of daily reading time from 8:30 to 10 a.m., and one hour “for small group instruction that is student intervention based.”

To keep children in class, Ferguson said, the school has begun to raise attendance through phone calls to parents and home visits.

Finally, the school’s second and third grade teachers are practicing “looping,” where a teacher from the previous year moves up a grade with the students in order to better know their strengths and weaknesses.

Overall, according to Ferguson, student discipline referrals have decreased by 75 percent since August 2017, as documented in the student behavior monitoring program. In addition, student learning and engagement has increased by 80 percent, according to analysis provided through feedback in the Great Schools Partnership’s online iWalkthrough Suite program.

Students are enjoying the opportunity to learn, Ferguson stated. The school’s teachers, she added, “are committed to each and every student, going the extra mile every day to make sure their students are gaining ground with their reading skills.”

More information on the Lodge Grass School District may be found at www.lodgegrass.k12.mt.us/.

Lodge Grass Elementary School reading improvement

(Measured from August 2017 to January 2018)

Kindergarten: +90 ability level points

First Grade: +60 ability level points

Second Grade: +42 ability level points

Third Grade: +28 ability level points

Fourth Grade: +102 ability level points

Fifth Grade: +191 ability level points

Sixth Grade: +401 ability level points