Cypress School District Meets High Expectations with *SRA Open Court Reading*

The Cypress School District (CYPSD) has a longstanding reputation for high achievement. In fact, CYPSD ranked sixth in Orange County, California in English Language Arts (ELA) on the Smarter Balanced Assessments.

The district attributes much of its success to a robust early literacy program that incorporates *SRA Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!**. These programs have been cornerstones of CYPSD's early-learning curriculum for the past 30 years.

**Imagine It!* was a previous edition of *Open Court Reading*.



DISTRICT INFORMATION



Name:
Cypress School District

Location:
Cypress, California

Grades:
K–12

Implementation

Veteran CYPSD teachers Tammy Newman and Krista Fosmire are too young to remember their district's initial implementation of *Open Court Reading*. But they have felt its impact directly. Both of them are former Cypress students who learned to read using *Open Court Reading*.

According to Newman, there's a simple reason why the school continues to use this explicit, systematic program—it works. "We know without a doubt that by the end of first grade our students will be able to read fluently," she says.

Newman has taught first-grade reading for the past 26 years; for 23 of them, Fosmire has taught in the classroom next door. Both women agree that even with changing demographics, larger student-to-teacher ratios, and socio-economic shifts, they are still able to successfully teach every student thanks to *Open Court Reading*.

"*Open Court* is structured to show kids how language works," says Taylor, "and it adapts to their needs so they can be successful."

Newman explains how the program makes literacy happen. "At the beginning of the year the students are flipping through their books just looking at the pictures," she says. "By December they start noticing the text, and they are amazed they understand it. Come Valentine's Day, they are really excited to read their Valentine's cards because they can actually read them."

"*Open Court Reading* starts at the beginning, with uppercase letters, lowercase letters, blending, and vocabulary. And it helps build that vocabulary while keeping students engaged," says Fosmire, 'It's amazing to see the progress."

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> **—Tandy Taylor,**
> **Director of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment**
> **CYPSD**

Student Success

Tandy Taylor, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment for CYPSD Schools, believes students in her district are high-achieving because they are engaged readers from the start. "*Open Court Reading* helps our students learn to read so they can read to learn. By the time they reach third and fourth grades, they are ready for that next level," she says.

According to Taylor, *Open Court Reading* works for students of all language abilities. "The programs provide structure and opportunities for all students, even those with special needs. They might need additional time, but they get it, step by step." she says, "Every piece of instruction has a purpose, like blending. Even quick learners need that skill and can apply what they learn to words they find challenging. The program provides those critical pieces of understanding. Knowing how much each student needs is the art of teaching."

Fosmire recalls one time *Open Court Reading* helped her bring it all together. “I was working with one boy when I saw that light bulb go on. The sounds and spelling suddenly made sense to him. It clicked. He was so excited it brought tears to my eyes,” she says.

Teachers in the upper grades of the Cypress School District are thankful they can expect every student to enter their classrooms with foundational skills. Now, they notice when a student comes from another district that doesn’t provide those skills. “Even when ‘whole language’ was the trend, the District said, ‘We’re not giving up. We’re not experimenting,’” says Taylor, “...We attribute all of our early learning success to *Open Court Reading*.”

Results

The proof is in the numbers. CYPSD has consistently ranked among the top schools in Orange County, California in ELA on the Smarter Balanced Assessments.

“We are seen as a destination district, which sets a high bar for educational excellence,” says Denine Kelly, a CYPSD principal. “*Open Court Reading* gives us the engagement strategies, classroom management tools, and targeted lessons to stay focused so every child can succeed.”

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> **—Krista Fosmire, Teacher CYSPD**

The Future

After 30 years of success with *Open Court Reading*, CYPSD is committed to staying the course. “When a ‘whole reading’ approach was considered, our superintendent, Bill Eller, wisely decided not to follow,” says Newman. “Our kids were learning how to read ...The bottomline is, *Open Court Reading* works.”

Products

Open Court Reading is a comprehensive K–5 reading, writing, and language arts curriculum whose explicit, systematic approach to teaching makes learning exciting and engaging for all students.

SRA Open Court Reading

To learn more about *Open Court Reading*, visit: **opencourtreading.com**

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