

SUCCESS STORY

Riverton Middle School Supports Core and More with Direct Instruction

Overview

As part of Fremont School District #25, Riverton Middle School serves approximately 2,500 students from the Riverton, Wyoming area. The school, which borders the Wind River Indian Reservation, has a diverse student population, with 45 to 50 percent of sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Academically, low reading scores were the norm, and special education was the only remediation option. Searching for an alternative to address their Response to Intervention (RTI) cases outside of special education, Riverton implemented *Corrective Reading*[®] and *Read to Achieve*.

Corrective Reading provides level-set instruction in decoding and comprehension. *Read to Achieve* increases reading comprehension in content-rich classes such as social studies and science. Together, these programs help Riverton educators narrow their students' achievement gap.

DISTRICT INFORMATION



Name:

Riverton Middle School

Location:

Riverton, Wyoming

Grades:

6–8

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–Sue Gosnell

Corrective Reading Teacher
Riverton Middle School

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Implementation

Riverton Middle School was concerned about its low test scores and knew it was time to do something different. A possible solution for improving their test scores was presented during a meeting between Cheryl Mowry, the middle school principal, and Wayne Callender, a nationally-recognized consultant on school-wide Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation.

“We attended an RTI workshop for the state of Wyoming, and Wayne Callender was there,” said Mowry. “He showed us the data on Direct Instruction to prove that it works.”

Callender’s insight convinced Mowry and other administrators that Direct Instruction could support a more effective RTI model in their school, and they were anxious to implement it.

With limited funds, they introduced Direct Instruction by borrowing materials from other schools. A grant from the district soon followed, allowing them to purchase *Corrective Reading* and *Read to Achieve*. When the grant money was exhausted, positive results from the programs convinced administrators to continue funding Riverton’s RTI transformation.

“Direct Instruction allows us to target the right kids with the right programs and the right teachers,” said core language arts teacher, Toi Porter. “That has been our biggest success.”

Sue Gosnell, a *Corrective Reading* level C teacher, recalled feeling clumsy with the program when she first used it. After six years in, she couldn’t imagine teaching without it.

“If you use the program with fidelity, you will gain multiple opportunities to help kids master skills,” said Gosnell. “Our entire remediation program now identifies reading needs and addresses deficits, so when kids walk out, they have the skills to be successful. You can’t ask for more than that.”

Student Focus

Combining *Corrective Reading* and *Read to Achieve* has given educators at Riverton Middle School the tools they need to support reading at every level in every classroom, including content-rich classes.

“We use *Read to Achieve* when students are struggling in classes like social studies and science,” said Porter. “Sometimes students ask, ‘Why am I here? I’m a good reader.’”

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–Cheryl Mowry

Principal

Riverton Middle School

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The problem may be that they read too fast, so they aren't reading accurately, or they read so slowly that they can't remember what they read. *Read to Achieve* addresses those comprehension issues because it has close-reading built in.”

Riverton teachers and administrators believe their special education program can avoid the stigma of some schools because any student can be pulled in for extra reading instruction at any time. Their strategy is to always know where students are, address issues as they arise, and work hard to move students forward.

Teachers support the program by spending the last half-hour of every day with students who need additional reading instruction. And if any teacher believes a student is struggling, he or she can simply recommend that child be placed for help.

Helen Sivret, who is viewed as Riverton's *Corrective Reading* guru by teachers and administrators, believes the programs allow teachers to focus on more enrichment and less on remediation. According to Sivret, “We don't have as many special education referrals as we did before because we have more than one way to address reading issues.”

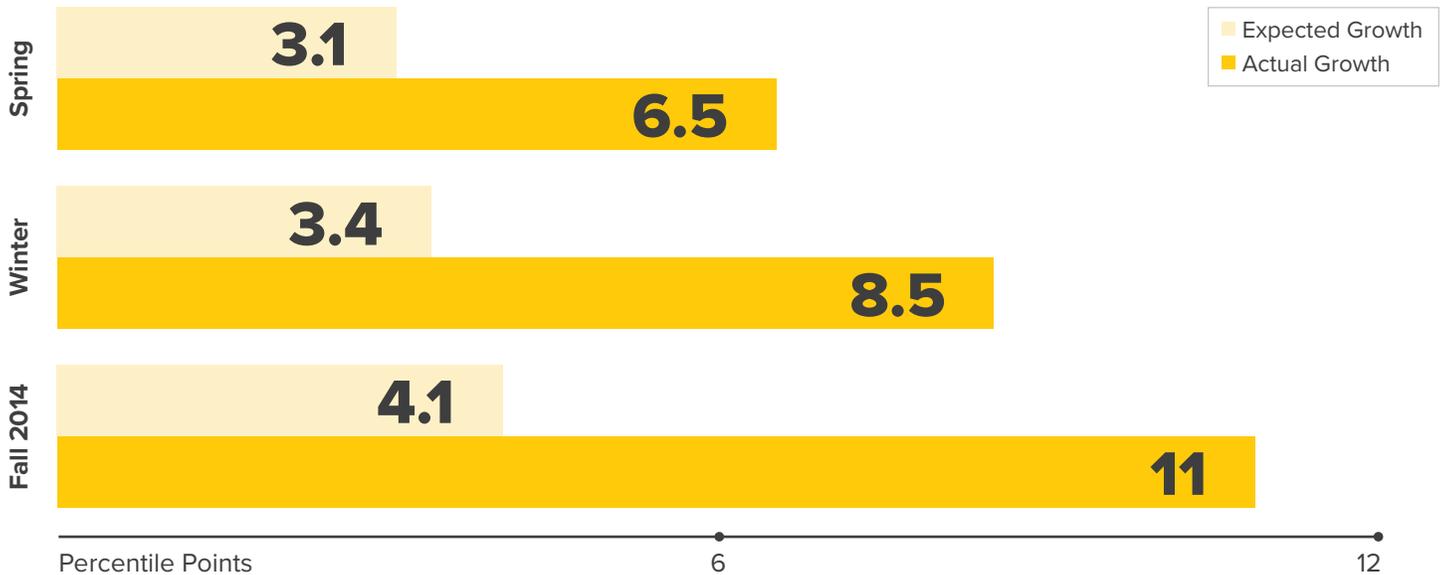
Mowry noted that changing their approach to RTI improves students' attitudes about learning. “The kids feel more confident. Students who would never read in class have begun to volunteer,” she said. “I've also noticed increased attendance and decreased behavioral issues since we've implemented the programs.”

Results

“Six years ago, we didn't have an option to help with reading skills beyond special education,” said Mowry. “Now we have two classes, core and more, that students must test out of to move on. Before, our below-basic kids were not showing growth. Now our state test results show that below-basic kids have risen to the basic level. We've never done that before.”

The 2014–15 school year offers a glimpse of Riverton's Direct Instruction success. The data shows all intensive students in grades six through eight performing twice as well as expected. In addition, 2016 Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing results of nine students in their *Corrective Reading* classroom show a 78 percent increase in their total reading score from the fall to the spring, with an average growth of 7.9 RIT (Rasch UnIT) points.

Fall 2014—Spring 2015 RIT Score Growth Average Growth of Intensive Students



Sixty-seven percent also met or exceeded their target RIT growth and raised their percentile ranking by an average of 27 percentile points.

Math scores also improved, and Mowry believes that Direct Instruction was a factor. “Math students needed remediation for reading, but the math teachers weren’t trained to provide it,” she said. “Now we’re able to provide more complete programs for learning. I can’t say every child improved, but we have seen consistently positive trend lines. Four to five years of positive data is impressive at any middle school.”

“*If you fail at our middle school, you have to work hard at it. We have a program to help every child.*

—**Helen Sivret**
Special Education Specialist
Riverton Middle School

The Future

Sivret is a proponent of implementing the RTI programs in every grade. “Reading intervention is not just an elementary thing,” she said. “It can help meet any student where they are and help move them forward.”

Instructional coach Cathleen Galitz agreed and believes it is all about having the right data. Galitz and other counselors test every child entering Riverton Middle School to understand where they need to be placed.

“We make sure the kids are in the right program, and then we make adjustments. We love, love, love the data *Corrective Reading* gives us, and how we can make sense of that data using the *SRA 2Inform* online progress-monitoring system,” she said. “Our goal as a district is to continue to combine skills with placement to create a success pathway.”

Sivret agreed, adding, “If you fail at our middle school, you have to work hard at it. We have a program to help every child.”



About *Corrective Reading* and *Read to Achieve*

Corrective Reading is designed to promote reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension skills of middle and high school students who are reading below their grade level.

Read to Achieve provides comprehension strategies that help middle and high school students achieve in content-rich classes such as science and social studies.

DIRECT
INSTRUCTION



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