

A graphic of a spotlight shining from the top left towards the center of the page.

Alaska School SPOTLIGHT

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

March 2023

Literacy has long been a focus for the Kenai Peninsula School District (KPBSD). Over the years, the KPBSD has implemented various programs to improve student literacy across all areas. While these efforts have had some success, like most of Alaska, KPBSD students are still not where they need to be when it comes to literacy skills. Superintendent Holland, with the support of KPBSD stakeholders, have implemented several strategies to make sure this changes in the future.

According to Holland, **“Literacy is the foundational skill upon which all other areas of student growth builds upon. The KPBSD is committed to doing all it can to ensure our students are starting life with the literacy skills that support them in life success.”**

The KPBSD’s commitment to student literacy success is evident by the inclusion of literacy in the 2022-2027 strategic plan. They have chosen to focus the student success priority largely on literacy (in all forms and at all levels). The following aims are included under the student success priority:

- Students will learn literacy skills through engaging instruction grounded in evidence and research-based best practices.
- KPBSD will increase the number of students at grade level proficiency or above in reading by building student confidence and success in their reading abilities.
- KPBSD will increase the number of students who are grade level proficiency or above in English Language Arts.

It is important to note that the KPBSD is focusing on students at all grade levels and that any reading initiatives or programmatic changes will address secondary students as well as primary.

The KPBSD has been using the Fountas and Pinnell (F & P) program for literacy instruction, however training on the program during its initial implementation was inconsistent and challenging to deliver due to many factors related



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to COVID. After a large contingent of the KPBSD leadership and staff attended the AK Reading Symposium, and in conjunction with Governor Dunleavy signing the AK Reads Act into law, it was determined that evidence-based literacy instruction should be prioritized in the district. During the summer of 2022, KPBSD instructional coach, Michelle Thomason, developed a K-5 scope and sequence tying all F & P and Heggerty materials currently being used in the district to Scarborough's Reading Rope.

During the fall of 2022, under the guidance of Superintendent Holland, the KPBSD continued to focus on effective literacy planning, based on the aims outlined in the strategic plan. The LETRs evidence-based literacy training was offered and more than 40 teachers and administrators were enrolled. An effective literacy sub-committee was formed within the 8 member District Instructional

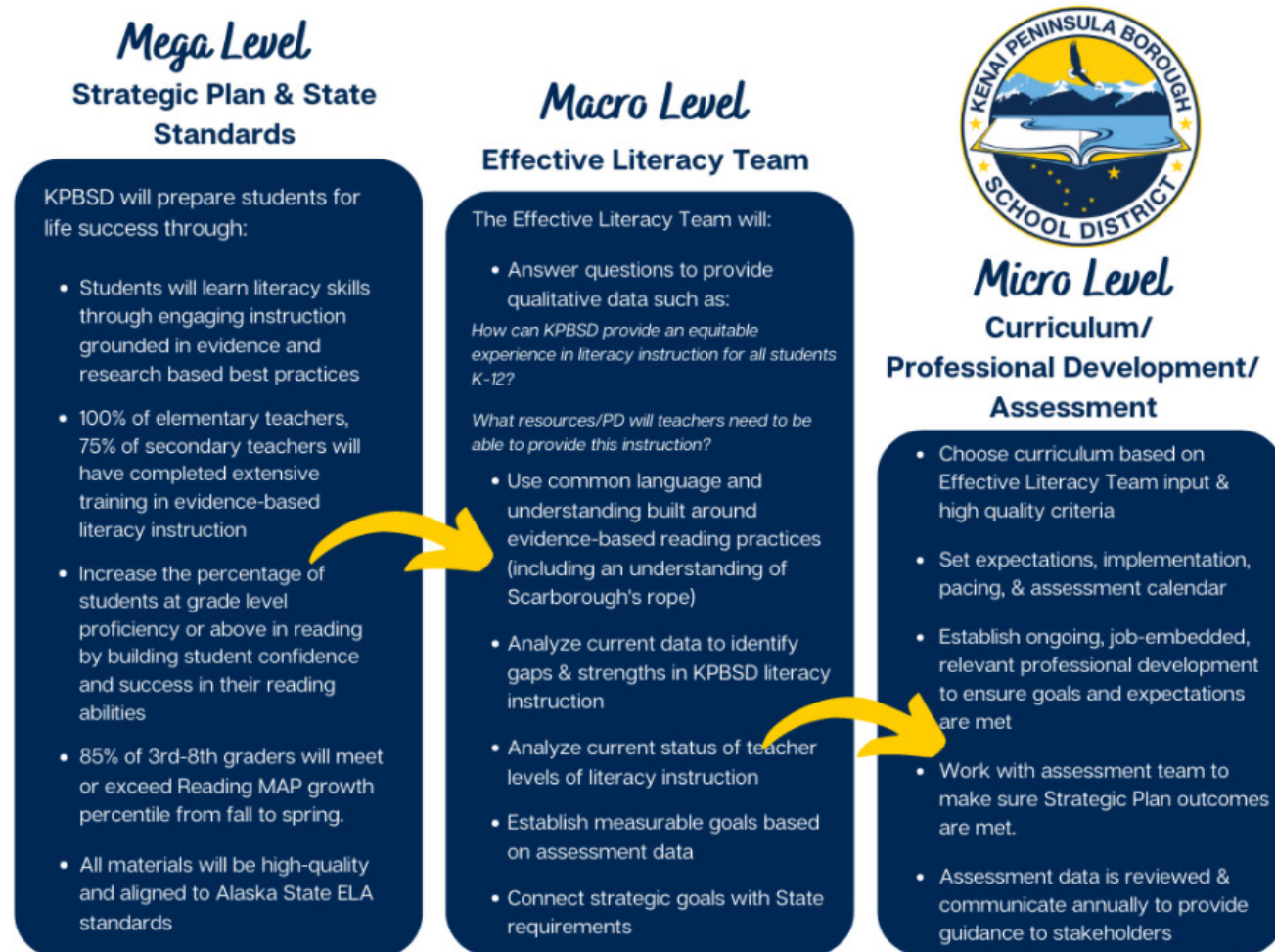
Team (DIT). This DIT-Lit sub-committee determined that it would be beneficial to broaden the scope of the voices in the conversation. The Effective Literacy Team was then established to best inform district leadership on next steps and the future overall philosophy of K-12 literacy instruction in the district. The Effective Literacy Team includes 23 members (15 school based positions and 8 district level positions) from all areas of the district, both geographically and institutionally. Primary, Secondary, K-12, Special Education, Intervention, School Board, School Psychologists, Librarians, and Administrators from Homer, Seward, the Central Peninsula, and across the Bay make up this diverse team. The goal of the Effective Literacy Team is to serve as the bridge between the Mega Level of the Strategic Plan and the Micro Level of Curriculum/Professional Development/Assessment implementation.

After building a foundation of common language, basic knowledge about evidence-based reading programs, and a understanding of the current state of KPBSD student literacy, the Effective Literacy Team will answer questions such as:

- What does/could equitable experience look like in all areas?
- How can KPBSD provide an equitable experience in literacy instruction for all students K-12?
- What does a literate student look like for elementary students? Secondary students?
- In what ways does increased student literacy connect with the strategic plan's goals & initiatives?
- How would changes to literacy instruction affect your area?
- What could good literacy instruction look like in your field?
- What resources/PD will teachers need to be able to provide this instruction?

Using the answers to these questions, the KPBSD will better be able to plan the future implementation of effective literacy instruction at all grade levels.

Moving forward, KPBSD has been working with DEED to replace the F & P curriculum. Through the ELA Curriculum Grant four core programs have been reviewed. The ELA Curriculum Committee has





put forth the request to use CKLA starting next school year. This makes sense, as KPBSD is also planning to use mCLASS for their literacy screener. Both are Amplify products.

Another amazing highlight is the work of the ELT team. Too often, when we discuss literacy, we only talk primary/elementary levels. This group goal is to tackle literacy K-12...it does not stop at elementary. KPBSD recognizes the need to support upper-level students with literacy acquisition as well.