Literacy for Life

Student Achievement Results:

2016-17

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Literacy Assessment in Saskatoon Public Schools

Student reading progress is assessed in many ways in Saskatoon Public Schools. In the classroom, our division-wide focus on Formative Assessment has teachers and students regularly assessing progress to ensure that all students achieve curriculum outcomes. Throughout the division, both teacher-created and standardized assessments are used to give teachers the very best information to help students reach their potential.

This report provides results from the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment (F&P) as an indicator of division-wide progress. The F&P assessment is a standardized assessment in that all students experience it in the same way and that their performance is compared to a common standard. In 2016-2017, F&P was administered in all grade 1-3 classrooms as well as in elementary-level literacy support programs, (e.g., Leveled Literacy Intervention, Roadways to Reading) two times per year. When completing this assessment, a student reads a series of increasingly difficult books and answers a few questions designed to assess her or his comprehension of the text. The student’s overall score is determined by the point at which she or he struggles either to read the text or answer the comprehension questions. (Note: This report is a follow-up to the 2016-2017 Literacy for Life year-end update presented to the Board in June, 2017).

Overall Results for Grades 1-3

This report splits student year-end reading results into three categories:

i. Percentage of students who were at or above expectations (GE),
ii. Percentage of students who were low (close) relative to expected levels, and
iii. Percentage of students who were very low (relative to end-of-grade expectations).

Results overview (2011-12 to 2016-2017):
- Grade 1: in 2016-2017, 67% of students were at or above GE (1% decline over 2015-16).
- Grade 2: in 2016-2017, 71% of students were at or above GE (5% decline over 2015-16).
- Grade 3: in 2016-2017, 78% of students were at or above GE (2% improvement over 2015-16*).

Table 1: F&P Results by grade – “At or above” expected levels (over time)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>78%</td>
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Table 1 shows the year-to-year trends in the percentage of grade 1-3 students whose year-end F&P scores were at or above end-of-grade expectations for 2012-13 to 2016-17 inclusive.

* The 5-year trend for grade 3 is positive. The proportion of students reading at or above GE has increased by 9% over this period.
Detailed Results – 2016-2017
The data reported above show overall results. While these data are useful to point out general trends, it is sometimes helpful to apply a magnifying glass to the data to put a finer point on them.

Figures 1-3 provide graphic representations of the 2016-2017 results for grades 1-3. These graphs break down the “at or above” and “below expected level” categories to help us make additional observations about students’ year-end results. The graphs provided in this update are in the same format that are used by schools as they work with their data.

Grade 1
At the grade 1 level, 67% of students were at or above GE (see Figure 1). Specifically,
- 16% were “at GE”
- 39% were “up to 1 GE above”
- 12% were “more than 1 GE above”

Figure 1 – Grade 1 results 2016-2017
Grade 2
At the grade 2 level, 71% of students were at or above GE (see Figure 2). Specifically,
- 16% were “at GE”
- 30% were “up to 1 GE above”
- 25% were “more than 1 GE above”

Figure 2 – Grade 2 results 2016-2017
Grade 3
At the grade 3 level, 78% of students were at or above GE (see Figure 3). Specifically,

- 13% were “at GE”
- 38% were “up to 1 GE above”
- 27% were “more than 1 GE above”

Figure 3 – Grade 3 results 2015-2016
**Significance of the Results**

These data tell us a great deal about both our students’ learning and the instructional responses required to help each student achieve grade-level expectations. In turn, they also give us direction about how we need to support teachers in their efforts to improve instruction in response to student learning needs.

On one hand, these results are worthy of celebration. Around three-quarters of students in grades 2 and 3 were reading **at or above** GE at the end of 2016-2017. The long-term trend for these two grades is also positive – meaning that a larger proportion of students are “on track” now as compared to 2012-2013. On the other hand, there is still work to do in supporting all of our young readers to reach or exceed grade level expectations.

Reading is a complex skill that requires a broad range of thinking processes to come together all at once. Research tells us that no one instructional approach helps every student learn each of these thinking processes effectively. We will continue to gather more data over time. With these data, we will develop a more robust understanding of student learning which, in turn, will be used to align teacher learning at both the division- and school-levels more closely with student learning needs. In short, these data will tell us: (i) what students need their teachers to learn to help them learn better, (ii) which areas of curriculum are strengths and which require additional instruction, (iii) how can we work with our families to support reading at home, and (iv) what new research we have to consult in order to learn these new skills.

**Current Instructional Supports**

Saskatoon Public Schools provides a broad range of instructional supports beyond regular classroom instruction when students find learning to read difficult. Among these additional supports are **Leveled Literacy Intervention**, the **Leveled Literacy Tutor Program**, and **Roadways to Reading**.

- **Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI)**
  LLI supplements regular classroom instruction. Students in LLI meet regularly in small groups with their teacher to:
  - Identify quickly students’ particular learning needs, and
  - Provide support tailored to their needs.

  Once the student has “caught on”, he or she “graduates” from the LLI group, returns to the regular classroom, and other students take his or her place. The length of time students receive LLI support ranges from one to eight months.

- **Leveled Literacy Intervention Tutor Program**
  The **Leveled Literacy Intervention Tutor Program** uses the LLI tools, but tutors meet with students one-on-one for direct instruction. There are three rounds of tutor placements per year lasting about two months each. Typically, students receive tutor support for one round in a year; however, in some cases, students receive tutor support for a second or third additional round.
• *Roadways to Reading*

*Roadways to Reading* provides intensive and individualized intervention to students experiencing significant difficulty learning to read. *Roadways* is a locally designed program during which teachers identify where struggling students are on the reading development continuum and support students along that continuum to help them get “on track”. Students in *Roadways* generally meet with their teacher in groups of four, four days a week for about 100 minutes each time.

**Recent Responses and Next Steps**

Several new initiatives were implemented in 2016-2017. Two of them are described below.

- Grade 1 to 3 teachers participated in professional learning about the *Saskatchewan Reads* and *La Lit* documents to enhance their existing English Language Arts instruction and assessment repertoires.
- Principals explored the *Saskatchewan Reads for Administrators* document, which is closely aligned to our Literacy for Life work. It highlights the role instructional leadership plays in improving student learning and provides school administrators with practical suggestions for supporting teachers on their learning journeys.

Plans for 2017-2018 include:

- Finalizing a set of SPS-specific core research supported instructional strategies for reading instruction, and to implement these strategies in all classrooms. This work will include implementation of the key instruction and assessment strategies identified in *Saskatchewan Reads*.
- Creating a literacy learning community that will provide intensive professional development for one teacher in each elementary school. These teachers will serve as literacy leaders and mentors in their respective schools.
- Increasing emphasis on targeted professional development on reading instruction for our principals and vice-principals to enhance their understanding of literacy rich learning environments and to strengthen their ability to foster these environments in their schools.
- Enhancing focus on the value of reading at home.
- Further implementation of the strategies for creating language-rich classroom environments that prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers have learned over the last few years.