



LAKE ARTHUR MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

**Legislative Education Study Committee
Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell
August 27-28, 2015**

**Small District Instructional Challenges and the New Mexico
Reads to Lead Grant
Lake Arthur Municipal Schools**



LAKE ARTHUR MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

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Vision: The Lake Arthur Municipal Schools
will represent THE high performing standard
for student achievement.

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Quality Instruction Descriptors

To provide quality instruction an effective school district, small, medium, or large, must emphasize the following objectives:

- Establish the foundation for a standards-based student-centered teaching process.
- Employ effective research-based teaching strategies.
- Deliver instruction that engages students in the active learning process.
- Secure quality staff to meet the instructional needs of the district's children.
- Have teaching staff that can apply a depth of knowledge to the New Mexico Content Standards, Common Core State Standards and standards being developed such as the Next Generation Science Standards.
- Embed and provide quality professional development an on-going basis.
- Use a results-driven system of continuous improvement process.
- Construct or employ value-added formative and summative assessments.
- Emphasize parent involvement in which parents are engaged in a child's learning process.

Small District Instructional Challenges

Lake Arthur Municipal Schools has employed every means possible to accomplish those objectives cited above. However, at the same time the educational challenges have been significant:

- Within the district an increase in number of low socio-economic children.
- Reduction in overall student population for a successive number of years.
- High turnover rate within the teaching staff.
- Inability to find highly qualified staff in core teaching areas.
- Inability to fill vacant teaching positions with certified staff.
- Professional development return rate low through inability to retain staff more than one or two years.
- Inability to provide daily coaching through a district instructional coach to instill effective teaching skills.
- Work load of individual teachers leading to inadequate time to prepare lessons and less than optimal presentation of content.
- Lack of elective programs that stimulate college and career exploration.
- Elimination guidance/counseling as a support mechanism for academic, emotion, and mental support of students.
- Inadequate funding to meet the state mandated educational program.

These factors are a challenge to any school district but substantially greater for a small school district in that one teacher controls multiple grade levels and content areas. Loss of a productive highly qualified teacher forces a program restart most every time. However, the district has striven to use effectively the New Mexico Reads to Lead funding to meet the goal of insuring foundation literacy skills in the K-3 English language arts reading program.

District/Charter School Level Leadership

For the 2015-2016 school year the district has set a target of increasing the percentage of students reaching reading proficiency by thirty (30) percent as measured by the End-of-Year Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, DIBELS Next, assessment.

This significant increase in student reading proficiency for the 3rd year of implementation has been prompted by the district having to rebuild the district's reading program. With the loss of previously trained teachers the district had to re-establish the district reading plan with the set of productive reading instruction non-negotiables. The district has worked diligently to move forward with each year's New Mexico Reads to Lead funding to create a sound instructional program that can be repeated with greater fidelity to address the challenge of staff mobility and change.

The district has sponsored and provided opportunity for teacher training and support in the Common Core State Standards. The core reading program of Story Town by Harcourt Publishers has been used consistently since its adoption. In conjunction with this instructional program the staff has received professional development in the Readers and Writers Workshop process. This explicit instructional process assures that text-based vocabulary and comprehension instruction with an emphasis on complex text takes place on a daily basis.

To observe and evaluate effective teaching strategies the district developed a NMTEACH Plan of Action that provided for a series of three observations during the course of a school year using the Public Education Department's NMTEACH training program and participated in regional teacher rater reliability work sessions. Recently, with the opportunities offered by the Public Education Department to change the district's NMTEACH Plan of Action into a more tailored process for the district, the administration has submitted a revised plan to streamline the NMTEACH observation process and to have the data portion be more responsive to identifying what achievement data needs to be aligned to Group A, B, C teachers.

One of the non-negotiables of the Lake Arthur Elementary School's reading program is to provide a 90-minute reading block for core reading instruction, embed literacy instruction using the Common Core Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, and provide additional time for intensive intervention. Although the master schedule has always been structured to incorporate these instructional time elements, the 2015-2016 elementary master schedule was taken a step further by developing a master daily schedule that established a designated time that would allow the teachers to employ a cross walk intervention time.

Through NM Reads to Lead and other supplementary funds Individual classroom libraries have been purchased, cataloged and organized for classroom use to meet the needs of beginning to advance level students. This allows for both CCSS fiction and non-fiction literature to be readily available to students and teacher at the level that would be the most productive for advancing each student's reading.

In conjunction with parent involvement initiatives to stimulate actual parent engagement into the instructional process of his/her daughter or son within Lake Arthur Elementary School the district has established a Student-Led Parent/Teacher Conference format in which each student explains after preparation within each student's mentor period his/her current academic performance directly to the parent. The student is also asked to present to the parent solutions to address possible commitment and effort issues by stating positive steps to complete assignments, meet a standard of performance, turn the work in on time, etc.

An effort to maintain continuity of instruction is provided by the district through continuing the use of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, DIBELS Next in grades 4, 5, and 6 to assist in determining reading proficiency in the upper grade levels. The data is analyzed by both the elementary and secondary PLC Teams in conjunction with grades K, 1, 2, and 3 through the interim assessments intervals of BOY, MOY and EOY.

Lake Arthur Municipal Schools does not receive enough state equalization guarantee funding to provide for a full-time instructional coach even with the opportunity to co-mingle the New Mexico Reads to Lead funds. To address this situation the district has secured two instructional consultants. One specializes in reading instruction that centers around Readers and Writers Workshop process within a Balanced Literacy program. The other consultant provides training in effective teaching processes and the research-based teaching strategies that are part of the NMTEACH Domains. Both consultants use the active effective coaching strategies that are described in the *PED New Mexico Reading Coach Model*. A pre/post conference is conducted at the beginning and end of the school year. With each coaching visit there is a discussion of work to be accomplished during that coaching visit and an exit conference to determine monitoring steps to include in the follow-up classroom observations and walk-throughs.

School Level Leadership

For the 2015-2016 as mentioned above the school principal completely revised the daily master schedule. This effort was to also include a permanent instructional staff meeting time within the school day. The most important of the three types of meetings (PLC, Logistical and Staff) is the Professional Learning Committee, PLC, instructional meeting to monitor program implementation, study student data results, and to determine next steps on a weekly basis. An improved agenda process and identification of major action steps have been identified to assist in improving the results of the PLC Team. Student performance data follow through and analysis on a week to week basis is a permanent agenda item.

The principal and the instructional consultant during the May, 2014, EOY in-service day led a work session to review and revise the district Lesson Plan to make it more teacher friendly but still meet all of the requirements of an effective planning tool that would meet NMTEACH Domain 1 Elements of effective teaching. A component of the revision stressed differentiation of instruction in Tier I instruction, special need student IEP goal configurations, and increasing ELL student vocabulary proficiency. This has been implemented for the start of the 2015-2016 school year.

A revised walk-through observation format has been incorporated into the NMTEACH observation system to assist in maintaining feedback and to provide follow-up on recommendations on the use of effective research-based teaching practices.

Professional Development

The 2015-2016 BOY professional development was structured to address specific training on reading strategies and the use of data to drive instruction. A specific work session was held on the Cloze reading process to assure it being a instructional tool to improve student reading proficiency.

Subsequent professional development for the district's in-service days will stressed the following areas to improve reading and writing instruction. They are:

- Continue to develop depth in the knowledge and strategy application of the Common Core State Standards.
- Application of effective reading strategies.
- Continue development of the Readers' and Writers' Workshop instructional process.
- Application of differentiated instruction and a greater repertoire of intervention strategies.
- Application of text complexity components within reading levels and Webb's Depth of Knowledge thinking levels.

Curriculum and Instruction

As stated above the district believes it has improved the delivery of the 90 minute reading block. In addition to period of time to provide reading instruction an emphasis will be placed on a balanced approach to provide explicit and systematic reading instruction so that students can apply the skills and strategies in text.

To address the need to move students more effectively out of intensive and nearing proficiency levels focused intervention will include:

- Research-based reading instruction that has been proven to accelerate progress of students exhibiting a reading deficiency.
- Differentiated instruction based on student assessment data to meet student's specific reading needs.
- Explicit and systematic reading development in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, with more extensive opportunities for guided practice, error correction and feedback.
- The integration of social studies, science, and mathematics text reading, text discussion and writing in response to reading.

Assessment

Each K-3 teacher is incorporating the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, DIBELS Next, progress monitoring process into the weekly PLC team meeting as a permanent agenda item. Daily instruction is to emphasize addressing the learning gaps identified within the DIBELS assessment profiles for each student. Reading foundation skills must be addressed as a stair step process for each student to assure lower level reading skills mastery leads to the next reading skill level to form the composite that eventually is reading as a total process.

In addition the district as part of the implementation of the Readers' Workshop process has included the formative, Qualitative Spelling Inventory, QSI, a once a month formative process and the Developmental Reading Assessment, DRA, Interim BOY, MOY, and EOY assessment. The QSI is a short spelling inventory to assess word knowledge that student's bring to reading and spelling. The DRA is used to place students in appropriate reading materials aligned to the Fountas and Pinell Text Level Gradient (A-Z). The F&P Text Level of a specific reading material enables the teacher to place the student more exactly in the reading materials that are not too low and thus causing little reading improvement or reading materials that are not too high which leads may lead to a significant level of frustration which will impede the acquisition of enhanced reading skills.

Budget Activities That Align with Increasing Reading Instruction and Student Achievement

The district reading team reviewed the budget and determine that accessible reading materials had been purchased through NM Reads to Lead and other supplementary program funding in 2014-2015. Therefore, the bulk of the funding for 2015-2016 would be allocated to supporting the instructional staff to accomplish the effective teaching goals described in previous sections of this presentation.

The staff is endeavoring to address reading intervention that isn't available through the school day through an full year weekly after-school tutoring program. The tutoring program is being funded through another supplementary funding resource the district has been able to secure for the 2015-2016 school year.

The Lake Arthur Municipal Schools' 2014-2015 and the 2015-2016 NM Reads to Lead budget summaries are presented for your review.

However, I must leave you with one last thought. This type of funding is generally regarded as not a permanent source of funding for a school district's educational program. It is often stated as being "soft money". Nevertheless, to continue to enhance effective teaching and improve student proficiency it must be continued, increased and moved over to a school district's SEG-based operational funding. For without it the ability of the Lake Arthur School District to offer an effective reading program that meets the needs of the students it serves becomes mired in the previously stated Challenges of a Small School District with little ability to cause positive change. Sometimes, it just takes sufficient funding to permit program viability that has as its cornerstone meeting student needs with sustainable resources to deliver effective teaching.

Proposed Budget for Use of New Mexico Reads to Lead Funds: FY 16

The New Mexico Reads to Lead funding distribution is based upon size of district/charter as found in Appendix I.

| Estimated Expenditures | # of FTEs (if applicable) | Dollar Total | Percentage of Total Reads to Lead Budget |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| K-3 Reading Coach position(s) funded by New Mexico Reads to Lead initiative | | \$26,000.00 | 52% |
| K-3 Reading Interventionist position(s) funded by New Mexico Reads to Lead initiative | | | |
| K-3 Reading Intervention Instructional Materials | | | |
| K-3 Reading Professional Development | | \$23,500.00 | 47% |
| Other | | \$500.00 | 1% |
| Total Proposed Budget Amount: | | | |

Proposed Budget for Use of New Mexico Reads to Lead! Funds: FY15

The New Mexico Reads to Lead! funding distribution is based upon size of district/charter as found in Appendix I.

| Estimated Expenditures | # of FTEs (if applicable) | Dollar Total | Percentage of Total Reads to Lead Budget |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| K-3 Reading Coach positions funded by <i>New Mexico Reads to Lead!</i> Initiative | | \$32,502.00 | 65% |
| K-3 Reading Interventionist positions funded by New Mexico Reads to Lead! initiative | | | |
| K-3 Reading Intervention Instructional Materials | | \$7998.00 | 16% |
| K-3 Reading Professional Development | | \$9000.00 | 18% |
| Other | | | |
| Indirect Costs (1% cap) | | \$500.00 | 1% |
| Total Proposed Budget Amount | | \$50,000.00 | 100% |

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