



# English Language Arts: Elementary Literacy

Evaluation Brief, 2017-2018 School Year

**AESD** ASSOCIATION OF  
EDUCATIONAL  
SERVICE DISTRICTS

Nine ESDs. One Network.  
Supporting Washington's Schools and Communities.

Dear ESD and OSPI Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that we share this Evaluation Brief to communicate what we have learned thus far in our exploratory pilot study focused on measuring the “Influence on Student Mastery of Content” in the OSPI/AESD Professional Learning Network Theory of Action.

The [OSPI/AESD Professional Learning Network Theory of Action](#) was developed collaboratively by ESD Regional Coordinators. The documents reflect the comprehensive and strategic approach to getting timely information from OSPI education leaders into the hands of our local teachers to improve student learning. It is the way we tell the story between the actions of the Regional Coordinators and teacher and student outcomes.

This brief provides an example of the type of information we are gathering to probe the assumptions in the Theory of Action that specifically focus on Regional Coordinators’ work. By studying one Elementary Literacy Specialist, the through line from Regional Coordinators’ work to student mastery of content is illuminated.

Together, let’s celebrate the collective effects of OSPI/AESD professional learning sessions on teachers and students across Washington State.

Sincerely yours,

Gene Sharratt, AESD, and Kathe Taylor, OSPI



## Student Learning Exploration

Throughout Washington State, Regional Content Coordinators serve as the conduit of information from our state education leaders to school districts across 71,362 square miles, spanning the snow-capped mountains of the Cascades to forested islands in Puget Sound to the rich agricultural fields in Eastern Washington. The Regional Coordinators work diligently in their Educational Service District (ESD) Regions to take common resources from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) addressing equity, standards and assessment to help teachers improve instruction and student learning. They offer courses throughout the year and work within schools supporting instruction through professional learning communities, classroom demonstrations and embedded coaching practices in cooperation with teachers, instructional coaches and administrators.

Last year, work began with the collaborative development of the [OSPI/AESD Professional Learning Network Theory of Action](#). Over the course of a month, Regional Coordinators from all nine ESDs and four content areas were guided through a series of conversations. With diligent attention to detail, they passionately shared the multi-faceted nature of their work and intended outcomes. After synthesizing volumes of information, Kauffman & Associates, Inc., (KAI) created the resulting Theory of Action that depicts the relationship between Regional Coordinators' actions and tasks to desired outcomes. This framework allowed for an evaluation to test assumptions about OSPI/AESD Professional Learning Network activities. By collecting data to confirm, modify or refute these relationships, the evaluation aims to ground practice in a clear analysis of what is working well and what may need to be improved.

Using a participatory approach to conduct research for this brief, KAI's Dr. Janet Gordon collaborated with teachers to explore how their engagement in OSPI/AESD professional learning has influenced students. Dr. Gordon used both quantitative (assessment scores, surveys, classroom work) and qualitative data (videos, audio, interviews) to tell the story of the teachers' cycle of inquiry, from professional learning to classroom implementation to adjusting practice and the influence on students.

### Spotlight – Elementary Literacy

Krista Chatters is an Elementary K-5 Literacy Specialist at Greywolf Elementary located in Sequim, which is served by ESD 114 in Bremerton, Washington. Ms. Chatters has spent most of her career at the kindergarten- through second-grade level. She has worked as a Title One literacy teacher and was trained as a Reading Recovery Teacher, an intensive intervention that works with the lowest-performing first-grade learners. Greywolf Elementary is a small rural school located on the Olympic Peninsula about 14 miles east of Port Angeles Washington. There are 26 classrooms in the school and 26 teachers. The school serves students from the following backgrounds: 80% White, 10% Hispanic, 8% two or more races, with the remaining 2%

being Asian, African American, American Indian and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Of these students, 46% use the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch program.

Ms. Chatters is active in the professional learning opportunities offered by her ESD, and she has been in the Fellows Leadership Program since it started approximately 3 years ago. The Fellows Leadership Program was designed in collaboration with OSPI and the ESDs to improve student learning through ongoing professional learning and leadership development. She has attended all of the English Language Arts (ELA) convenings and numerous courses offered by the ESD. She attributes her success providing professional development to the K-five teachers in her building to these learning experiences. Ms. Chatters meets with the kindergarten teachers every two weeks and with first- and second-grade teachers weekly to focus on instructional strategies for struggling learners served in the Tier Two Literacy Support Program.



*Greywolf Elementary School in Sequim, Washington, where Krista Chatters is an Elementary K-4 Literacy Specialist.*

## Implementation of Professional Learning

Ms. Chatters depends on the ESD and the Fellows Program to build her knowledge, skills, and abilities to run the Tier Two Literacy Support Program. At Greywolf Elementary School, teachers receive new students every year who are behind in reading. In the fall 2017, of the new students to Greywolf, about 40% needed Tier Two Reading intervention.

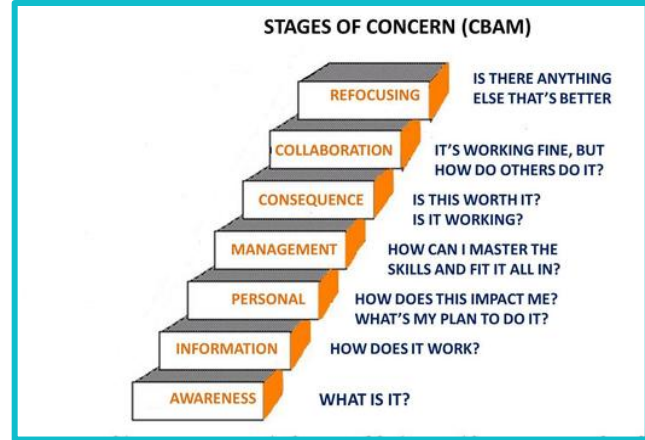
When asked where her most significant improvements have been, she responded: (1) using the content-specific Smarter Balanced Assessment Resources, (2) using the English Language Arts (ELA) Menu of Best Practices, and (3) learning how to share that information with teachers to improve the whole system. She elaborated on how the ESD and Fellows Program has improved her leadership skills, enabling a better exchange of content knowledge with the teachers:

*“Attending the OESD trainings has helped my own content knowledge grow and has helped me with [professional development] ideas for the K-five staff. I do have a lot of opportunity to have that direct interaction with the teachers, and we talk about instructional practices, what's working, what isn't working [and] then make changes.”*

This year, she has found the digital library playlist and literacy assessments very valuable, as well as evidence of claims and learning targets.

She embraced the Concerns-Based Adoptions Model (CBAM) used in the Fellows Leadership Program. CBAM aims to build greater understanding about how individual teachers work through the change process, or stages of concern, when modifying classroom instruction. The

diagram on the following page provides a set of clarifying questions about aspects of instruction for each of the seven stages of concern. CBAM helps leaders work together with teachers in more meaningful ways to transform teaching and learning while being sensitive to teachers' feelings. Ms. Chatters found the model very useful to build her communication and collaboration skills to improve teachers' receptivity and provide appropriate support:



*“To me, the leadership skill development in the area of delivering professional development has been the major area [of my growth]. It's all about increasing not only content knowledge, but leadership capacity, which is the number one area ... then, the supports [can be implemented] not only at the school level, but district implementation.”*

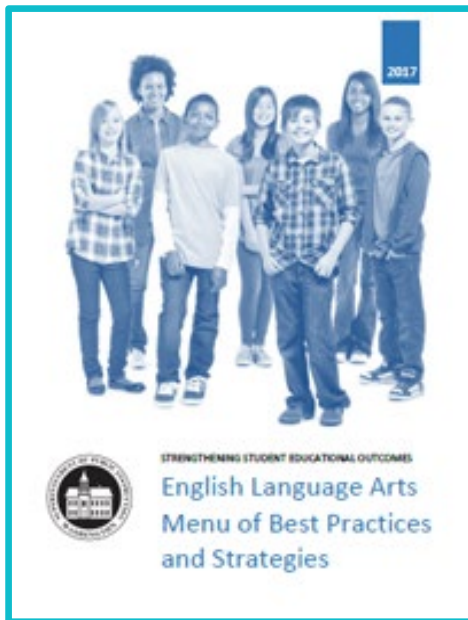
A diagram of the CBAM model dimensions that Ms. Chatters uses to support teachers in her trainings.

## Application of Knowledge and Skills Learned

Regarding the application of knowledge and skills learned Ms. Chatters explained:

*“We've had the capacity to remediate quite successfully in the past, but we've just been experiencing a wave of new students that are needing support in literacy. We don't have the manpower in the Wolf Den to do it all ... so it's more important than ever that*

*Tier Two support is also happening in the classroom, so, in reality, kids can actually get a triple dose of supports when you're talking, especially acceleration.”*



ELA Menu of Best Practices and Strategies that Ms. Chatters emphasizes in her trainings.

To build the capacity of the classroom teachers to provide Tier Two support, she shared what she learned in the Fellows program and the ESD professional learning sessions:

*“Using the ELA Menu of Best Practices and Strategies in my trainings has been an emphasis this year. Also, ongoing learning about SBAC [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium], CCSS [Common Core State Standards], literacy assessment information, and reading foundational skills has been key throughout my attendance as a Fellow the last three years. I have shared this information during ongoing staff [professional development]*

*during late-start Mondays about every four weeks and also during half-day, grade-specific trainings about every semester.”*

“The whole Smarter Balance System topics have been really powerful,” Ms. Chatters acknowledged; however, she cautioned that it is not just the content shared that has led to improved student scores. It is also her deeper understanding of how to facilitate adult learning. The Fellows Program has increased her capacity and confidence to bring information back to her school and facilitate the learning with other teachers:

*“Yes, the content is excellent but for my own ability to do this job effectively, leading is my greatest area of growth ... I think [leadership development] has become more intentional through the Fellows work. They will say, ‘here’s something you can do, or here’s a format you can try with your teachers and so they are very intentional about doing that now.”*

The staff look forward to Ms. Chatters returning from the Fellow Convenings and ESD professional learning courses, which gives her the opportunity to practice what she has learned this year using CBAM:

*“The staff are just very open and love to learn ... they look forward to hearing what I have learned, and I’m very intentional to say, ‘at my Fellows meeting these are some updates I learned,’ and just sharing that I’m a learner, too, and not an expert. I’m not the expert. I’m very quick at saying, ‘If I don’t know, I’ll go do some homework and find out.”*

CBAM puts teachers at ease and opens channels of communication around student learning in a non-threatening way.

## Influence on Student Achievement

Ms. Chatters shared how her engagement in ESD professional learning helped her lead efforts to support early literacy development at Greywolf Elementary. Being armed with the content knowledge and skills enabled her to affect teacher change. She said:

*“When we first did our DIBELS, our kindergarten phonemic awareness data was concerning, and, at mid-year still, was not okay ... But that’s all right; we can do something about that. When we first brought DIBELS in, our phonological awareness scores were still poor mid-year and so looking at the data was difficult at first.”*

Ms. Chatters guided the teachers through the cycle of inquiry while being sensitive and providing support along the way:

*“We were thinking, ‘What’s happening here?’ And asked ourselves, ‘Is it because we only have a half day, or is it our curriculum,’ and so on ... We were able, as a team, to figure out some issues ... and it was actually so powerful, and we realized we actually did have the curricular materials to do a decent job to teach this.”*

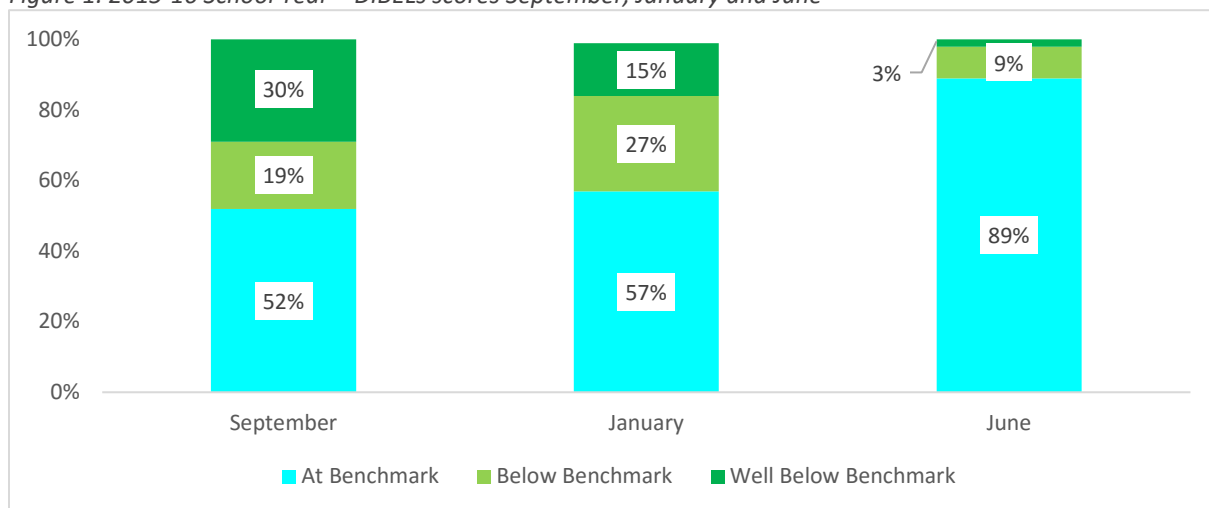
*By implementing CBAM, the teachers arrived at a consensus, achieved buy-in, and agreed to include this additional content in their classroom instruction. With the assistance of the Regional Coordinator and training, Ms. Chatters said the teachers at Greywolf Elementary are “becoming better ourselves at understanding what Tier Two is, how do we teach it, and training the parents and giving them the resources, and so on. All of a sudden we found some great moments of change.”*

A theme across most, if not all, the ESDs has been to increase the capacity and expertise of teachers to deeply understand how to use student data to modify instruction. The data also can lead teachers to get specific, targeted professional development that Regional Coordinators’ can design, develop, and facilitate. Ms. Chatters said:

*“So that’s been kind of really exciting. And so, I think that the staff has really seen data can be really powerful because it can lead us to trainings that will make our jobs more effective with our students.”*

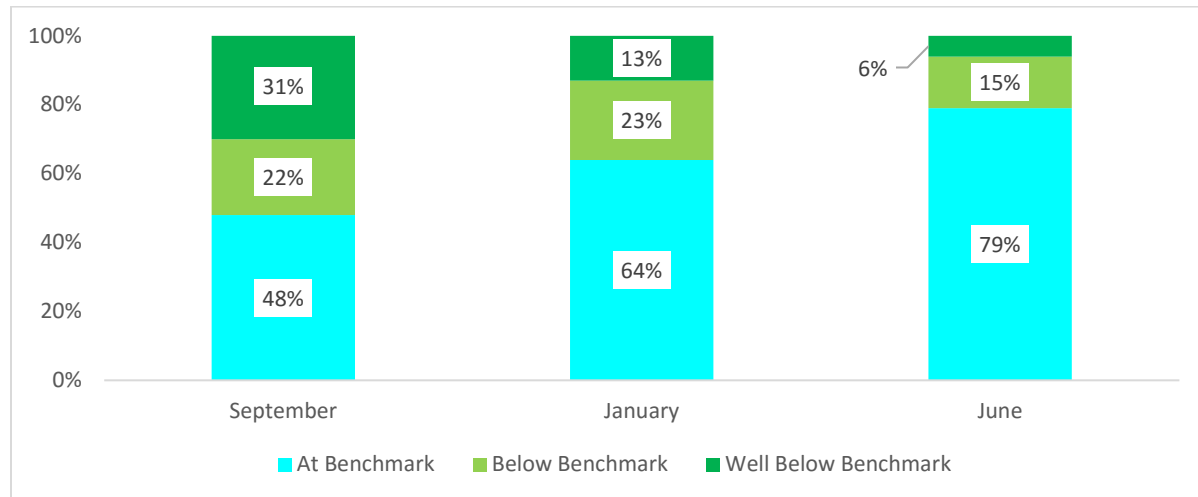
Data strongly suggest that the ESD trainings and Fellows’ experiences have made it possible for teachers to influence student learning. Reflecting on her first year as a Fellow, Ms. Chatters shared student growth on the DIBELS assessment. On the test administered in September 2015, 52% of the kindergarten students were at benchmark, 19% were below benchmark, and 30% were well below benchmark. (See Figure 1.) Students gained proficiency throughout the year, as evidenced by the scores in January, as teachers applied what they had learned from Ms. Chatters. In June 89% of the kindergarten students were at benchmark, 9% were below and 3% were well below.

Figure 1. 2015-16 School Year – DIBELS scores September, January and June



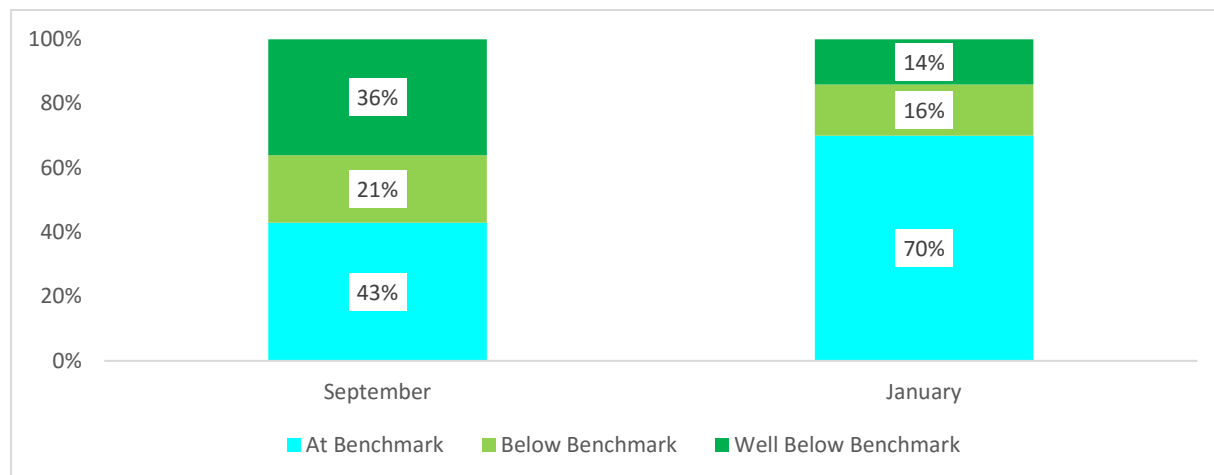
On the DIBELS test administered in September 2016, 48% of the kindergarten students were at benchmark, 22% were below benchmark, and 31% were well below benchmark. (See Figure 2.) Students' reading proficiency steadily increased through January, and by June, 79% of the kindergarten students were at benchmark, 15% were below, and 6% were well below benchmark.

Figure 2. 2016-17 School Year - DIBELS scores September, January and June



Lastly, on the DIBELS test administered in September 2017, 43% of the kindergarten students were at benchmark, 21% were below benchmark, and 36% were well below benchmark. (See Figure 3.) At the end of January 2018, 70% of the students were at benchmark, 16% were below, and 14% were well below benchmark.

Figure 3. 2017-18 School Year - DIBELS scores September and January



Reflecting on the steep school-wide gains made in student learning, Ms. Chatters shared:

*"I've kind of, over time, come to peace that I'm not just impacting my own class of, say, 25 students, I really have the privilege to impact teacher training, which really impacts*



*building wide. So, definitely, being a part of these professional learning opportunities and bringing the information back to our school has been one piece of the ability to improve dramatically.”*

And there is evidence of these improvements in the data. Greywolf Elementary School received the School of Distinction Award and multiple Washington Achievement Awards in the areas of reading and math. In 2016, they won a National School Distinction Award, as well. Ms. Chatters reflected on how her involvement in professional learning from the ESD has transformed teacher practice and student achievement:

*“I'm really proud of the fact that we've gone from the lowest-performing elementary school on the list to one of the top, and there's many pieces that have contributed to that, [like] my opportunity to participate in the Fellows [Program], which has helped me bring great information back to the teachers.”*

---

## Next Steps

Dr. Gordon will continue to explore the influence of teacher professional learning on students with the larger group of English Language Arts, early learning, mathematics, and science teachers. Also included in the evaluation are school administrators who are Fellows and Instructional Coaches. This analysis will be included in the 2017-18 year-end evaluation report. The report will share the factors that professional development participants identified as having shaped their classroom practices and, in turn, their students' learning. Learning from this exploratory pilot will prompt action in the upcoming 2018-19 evaluation, inform next steps to maximize the OSPI/AESD Network's investment of time and resources, and set the course for teacher and student success.