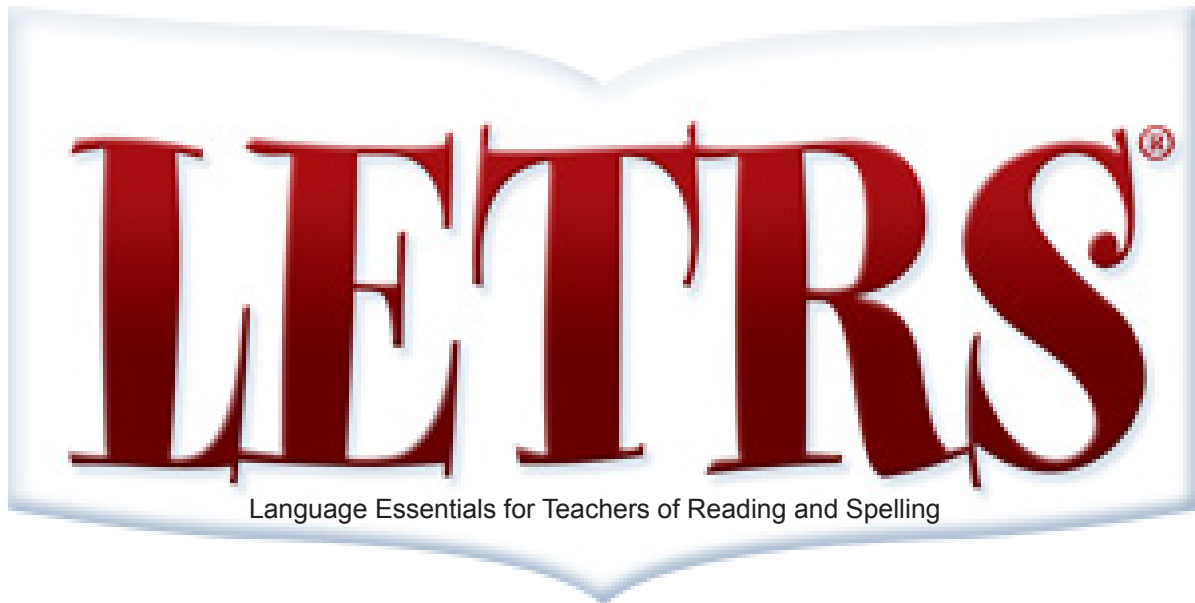


“Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.”

- Margaret Fuller



“There are many little ways to enlarge your child’s world.  
Love of books is the best of all.”

- Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

# Hancock County Leading in Ky Reading Instruction

Over the past school year, the Hancock County School District has invested 1,680 hours in teacher and administrator professional development for the best reading training in the state. The district has trained 100% of all K-2 teachers, 100% of the Elementary Administrators, as well as the Assistant Superintendent and Special Ed Director at the district level. If this isn't impressive enough, the district also has teachers trained to provide this outstanding reading instruction in every grade from Kindergarten up to 12th grade!

The Kentucky Department of Education has also acknowledged this training as one of the best in the state and will be promoting this same initiative across the state of Kentucky this coming school year. Hancock County Public Schools has been asked by KDE to share their last year's plan of training teachers in their statewide communication efforts to develop their new KDE Reading Academies. KDE will be promoting this same training with all 171 school districts across the state this coming school year. These Reading Academies will be offering this same reading training to 2,400 teachers in Kentucky. KDE is asking HCPS to provide testimonials of the impact this training has made with teacher instruction and student success.

HCPS is on the right track with providing exemplary instruction at all levels - elementary, middle and high school. This training is very intensive for the teachers, having to dedicate 60 hours over a two year period which include assessments after each of the 64 sessions and 8 unit assessments. Many have compared this training to an intense college class. Student data is collected during the training and teachers are taught what skills are missing for a student and how to adapt their instruction to teach the next skill needed in order to leave no gaps in their learning to read successfully. Teachers completed part one of two this year and will continue part two of the course next year. Additional teachers who were not able to start this training this past year will begin their training this upcoming school year. This is embedded as a part of the HCPS Continuous Improvement Plan.

With the partnership of the University of Louisville, the district was able to provide a total of 27 teachers and administrators with the LETRS training (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling). This training is a combination of online learning as well as in-person learning taught by U of L instructors. Through this training, these teachers have strengthened their knowledge of the language structure, the development of the reading brain and how to nurture the development of foundational literacy skills such as decoding and language comprehension.

Teachers and administrators who completed this LETRS training were amazed at the impact it was having on their instruction after implementing the new strategies learned. One teacher, Mrs. Briana Pulliam, who has taught for over



Kevin Husk- HCHS teacher, works with students in summer school.

20 years and had great success teaching reading in the past said, "I am extremely grateful that Mr. Asberry and Mrs. Poynter invested in our students and teachers by providing this training in the science of reading. This training reiterated to me the need for explicit, systematic and sequential phonemic awareness and phonics instruction." With this ripple effect being echoed by other teachers in the district, the district has seen teachers revitalized and eager to implement the new strategies and see the results from their new training.

HCPS also backed up the LETRS training with an Orton Gillingham training for 29 teachers and administrators to learn the specific skills needed for decoding and spelling. Through this training, the specific researched based strategies were aligned with each schools' newly purchased core reading programs to engage students in a multi-sensory, sequential, and individualized phonetic learning to reading plan. This program, separate from LETRS, also requires another 30 hours of training dedicated to the specific skills and sequence to teaching the phonetics, word association, and decoding skills that are needed to assist students in becoming proficient readers.

HCPS trained 22 teachers in the Orton Gillingham best practices at the elementary level, six teachers at the middle and high school level as well as two principals, an assistant principal, the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Assessment and the Special Education Director. Again, 100% of the Kindergarten to 2nd grade teachers have completed both the LETRS and the Orton Gillingham training - this is over 90 hours of training dedicated by each teacher. The district has completed a full school year of true instructional training to teach students to read and look forward to the impact it will have on the success of the students.



Melissa Ruhe and Heather Bowlds read with students while they eat lunch.

The district is gaining momentum, as teachers put the numerous hours of training to practice for this coming school year. Summer School in July has given nine days for the teachers to practice the skills with students and complete screeners that will assist teachers to develop educational reading plans for the upcoming school year. Superintendent Asberry discussed the district growth goals for teaching and learning at the Monday, July 25th Board meeting. Mr. Asberry said, "We want to continue growing. We want our students to have what they need in our classrooms and our teachers to have the support they need to provide our students with the best instruction possible. They should not need to go anywhere outside our schools for help."

Each school in the district has a plan for interventions to assist any student who has fallen behind or has transferred into the district for intensive instruction in addition to the regularly scheduled reading time. At the high school and middle school level, Heather Bowlds and Kevin Husk have taken on the challenge of not only completing the Comprehensive Orton Gillingham training level, but also the Intermediate training level to address the gaps in learning that have prevented some students from being successful readers. They will be leading the progress in their buildings to ensure each student has a plan to reach proficient reading levels.

To help support the work in moving forward, the district has placed three experienced teachers from Hancock County who have had the LETRS and Orton Gillingham training to assist teachers along the way. These Literacy Coaches will ensure the teachers have support with any questions they have, model lessons, and assist in creating a district alignment from elementary, middle and high school. Briana Pulliam, Anita Lamar and Wendy Kenny will be District Literacy

Coaches to ensure the language and alignment are in place to support the Hancock County students to become successful readers. Mrs. Pulliam will be training to become a LETRS Facilitator and also going through the year-long process of being an Orton Gillingham Instructor. Ms. Lamar has years of experience to address the Tier 2 instructional interventions students need to build their reading skills. Mrs. Kenny will be trained to be a district LETRS Facilitator. With this district support in place, HCPS will continue to grow professionally and provide a team approach to teach all our students to be successful readers.

HCPS has supported this work from the very beginning. The Hancock County Board of Education teamed with the University of Louisville to supply the training, the time needed for the training, and materials teachers needed. U

of L also played a big part in the district receiving a large Read to Achieve Grant that allows the elementary schools to provide the necessary support and materials needed for teaching best reading practices with consistency.

Last school year, the new district Superintendent, Robby Asberry, emphasized he wanted all students to have what they needed to learn. As an analysis was done on the current reading approaches in each of the schools, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Assessments, Robin Poynter and Mr. Asberry realized that the purchase of a new reading program would be helpful for district curriculum alignment, but programs do not teach, teachers teach. So the investment in teacher training began. With the understanding that "informed teachers" are the best assurance to prevent reading failure. Hancock County has invested in the most valuable skill anyone can have and that is;

## LEARNING TO READ.



Cassi Payne working one on one with a student at South Hancock Elementary during Summer School.