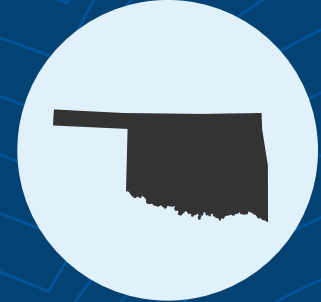


CASE STUDY

# Students in Oklahoma Improve Reading Skills

Public Schools in Stilwell, OK



## Summary

Stilwell Public Schools is a small rural school district that has an elementary, middle and high school. Serving about 1,000 students, the district was looking for a way to enhance its literacy programs. As such, the district applied for a **Federal Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program Grant** which they were awarded in the fall of 2016. Partnering with EPS Instruction and Intervention (EPS), Stilwell Public Schools proposed a comprehensive approach to literacy improvement for the district. The grant proposal focused on all essential components of literacy across the district including adopting some intensive interventions for the lowest performing readers, through to on-level materials including vocabulary development. *iSPIRE*® was selected to focus on the lowest performing readers, *Explode The Code*® (ETC) Online for K-4 students developing core phonics skills, and *Wordly Wise 3000*® Online for all students to enhance vocabulary and proficiency in reading.

In addition to deploying EPS reading programs with professional development support, improving access to library books and student readers was a part of this literacy initiative. Both Stilwell school libraries received thousands of new titles over the project period, dramatically enhancing key genres and content areas such as biographies, science, social studies, graphic novels, and story collection.

**1000**

Students

**K-12**

Grades

### CHALLENGE

Advance literacy with strong home-school engagement. Increase number of fourth and eighth grade students who meet/exceed proficiency levels in reading.

### SOLUTION

Use *iSPIRE* with lowest performing readers, *Explode The Code Online* for K-4 students developing core phonics skills, and *Wordly Wise 3000 Online* for all students to enhance reading proficiency.

### RESULT

Fourth grade students reading proficiency rate increased to 86% from 19% and eighth grade students increased to 51% from 15% per STAR assessment data from previous year. 2.0 grade levels.

## Implementation

A literacy coordinator and project manager, Jane Rhoads, was hired to support the implementation of Stilwell's literacy program.

The district was provided enough laptops for servicing reading classes and the EPS online reading programs. EPS reading programs included: **iSPIRE**, **Wordly Wise 3000 Online**, and **ETC Online**.

Teachers received professional development on the use of each program. The grant funded several literacy specialists who received further professional development on the EPS programs. These literacy specialists were available to assist teachers in utilizing the programs with fidelity and aided the teachers on an ongoing basis.

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**“I absolutely love the EPS programs! I had to stop teaching with them or a few weeks to do benchmark testing and I missed the programs so much. I’m currently working on a way to have more time with each student next year so we can use them more, and more effectively.”**

Rita Christie, Elementary Teacher

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The elementary teachers implemented the Touchphonics and Sound Sensible programs with kindergarten students. The students liked the “hands on” activities and saw these activities as a more fun way of learning. The elementary teachers also used iSPIRE, which is an intensive multi-sensory program that targets the lowest performing readers, and ETC Online as a phonics-based program. These students also had access to Wordly Wise 3000 Online to further round-out this coordinated literacy approach.

The middle school used Academy of Reading as an intervention to help develop fluency and decoding skills with some students. Other middle school students used Wordly Wise 3000 Online.

This was a comprehensive literacy approach that touched on all students at all grade levels. High school students, for example, utilized their reading lab and a rolling cart of laptops and all students had access to Wordly Wise 3000 Online, a program that integrates vocabulary instruction with comprehension activities.

A Reading is FUNdamental project was implemented that gave the community access to the libraries during evening hours, providing workshops and books for parents to promote home-based literacy activities. Students districtwide received new books to promote reading at home, that was tied to a Family Literacy Night. As a part of this grant, the book-to-student ratio improved from 4.4-1 to 7.25-1 at the Elementary/Middle School library and from 8.9-1 to 10.96-1 at the High School.

The Literacy Specialists held monthly after-school workshops for students and parents. They discussed topics such as: the library and how it works, the diverse types of books (fiction, etc.), what the parents like to read, the interests of the students, and they did engaging activities to get the students and parents involved. The Literacy Specialists also incorporated monthly Reading is Fun activity worksheets in each level, with each participating student receiving a treat or a reward. They found this very motivating and positive for the elementary school students.

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**“We’ve had 45 students this year come up to grade level!! I’m so excited about this. It’s making a difference in kids’ lives—and that’s what we are all about. I look forward to using these programs to help our students all year next year.”**

Rita Christie, Elementary Teacher

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## Remarkable Results

One of the goals of this literacy grant was to increase by 3% annually the number of students in grades 4 and 8 who meet or exceed proficiency levels on the STAR Assessment compared to benchmark data collected in May 2016. Each grade level greatly exceeded these goals. In grade 4, the number of students that tested Proficient, went from 18.9% to 86% Proficiency (67-point increase with the 43 students in grade 4 in 2017). In grade 8, the number of students that tested Proficient, went from 14.5% to 50.1% Proficiency (36-point increase with 27 students in grade 8 in 2017).

The teachers felt this grant was very successful with the students. They enjoyed the EPS programs as both learning tools, and allowing students to have fun at the same time. They liked the idea that each student could be assigned the level that was good for him/her. Consequently, the programs became very individualized without any fear of embarrassment for the students. The teachers liked that EPS has more than one program to offer

the students daily helping to increase variety for students. The teachers loved the aspect of take home books. They felt this gave the students an opportunity to learn to read at home and not just read “school books.” The teachers appreciated they could use the programs, get student reports as soon as needed, and there was not a lot of additional paper work required for the teachers. They just got to enjoy working with the students and seeing the results.

According to Jane Rhoads, “The Innovative Approaches to Literacy grant is absolutely fantastic. This grant is a ‘Win-Win’ for everyone involved. Stilwell Public Schools has seen remarkable results through the EPS programs. The teachers really like the programs, as they keep the students’ interest, as well as having students work at their own pace or as a part of small group instruction. These are tools which help the teacher and the student.”

FOURTH GRADE STAR READING ASSESSMENT DATA				
Date	Enrolled	Tested	Proficient	% Proficient
*2017	43	43	37	86%
2016	53	53	10	19%

\*67-point increase % of proficient students in reading

EIGHTH GRADE STAR READING ASSESSMENT DATA				
Date	Enrolled	Tested	Proficient	% Proficient
*2017	53	53	27	51%
2018	81	76	11	15%

\*36-point increase % of proficient students in reading

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