

Good morning! My name is Genelle Eggerton and I am the principal of Western Elementary with Lexington Local Schools. The village of Lexington is located outside of the Mansfield area. Western Elementary services students preschool through third grade.

Lexington local schools has worked diligently over the past 7 years to provide quality Professional development to teachers and paraprofessionals who serve students with dyslexia and language disorders. Our district goal is to build independent readers who are competent at or above their grade level. Through this commitment We are putting systems into place that help all learners and give teachers evidence-based structures to use within their classroom, in small groups, or in one on one settings. In order to meet these goals for students, we start with teachers first, by providing them with learning environments to gain these skills and competencies.

As a Dyslexia Therapist, Wilson Credentialed Trainer, and one who was an early childhood struggling reader, I understand first-hand the struggle of learning how to read in a whole language learning environment and in an unstructured literacy world. As an Intervention Specialist and Principal, I see the daily struggles of students trying to break the code to learn how to read and educators grasping at straws to try to assist the students they so passionately care about. Therefore, I came to Lexington Local Schools 7 years ago to help change the outcomes for many teachers and students who truly want to learn to read and provide evidence-based practices through a structured literacy environment for all students. Hence, through this process and to the very end, my goal is to ensure that every teacher in our district can look straight into the eyes of their students with dyslexia and say with confidence, "I know how to help you."

Please, walk this journey with me as our district began to ask the question, "Do we want students to be well schooled or well educated?" Of course, our answer was to be well educated and this means that We knew that at any cost we needed to ensure that each student needed to be well educated for whatever came next in their life. We started looking at general reading instruction and incorporated teaching Foundations, which is a structured literacy reading program, to grades PK-2 so that all students were invited to the table of the structured literacy experience. Teachers received year long training through a Foundations Facilitator and spent many hours of training through in service, coaching, and workshops to prepare for understanding the structures of structured literacy and how to teach the components of structured literacy with the proper procedures to every student they serve.

This year, we have evaluated our procedures and processes and have participated in Foundations Facilitator training so we can have a credentialed facilitator in our building who can coach teachers in the instructional practices, hold ongoing workshops, and in the upcoming years, train one Foundations Facilitator per grade level for ongoing sustainability. As Vince Lombardi says, "Practice doesn't make perfect; perfect practice makes perfect" and we know this starts with teacher training and development.

After we reviewed our reading practices, we focused on emergent reading skills and how to screen for early signs of dyslexia tendencies and how to remediate immediately. Each student who enters kindergarten is given an assessment on phonology with an emphasis on phonological awareness; how we hear sounds. We know that all emergent readers must have a strong grasp of phonology in order to lay a firm foundation of reading skills in emergent readers. If students show deficit skill in this area, then they receive remediation in phonological awareness through small group instruction.

All staff, teachers and paraprofessionals, received training in the difference in phonics and phonemic awareness and the importance these skills are to the reading process. Through this training we have evaluated our progress of initial instruction and we have seen a decrease in the number of students needing specialized education in this area. I believe this is due to teacher knowledge and understanding of how to enhance current instruction to be more conducive to building phonemic awareness in all students starting at the preschool years.

Lastly, the district has focused on intensive structured literacy training for teachers that focuses on students in grades 2-12 who are dyslexic or exhibit language disabilities. The district committed to train an in-district Wilson Credentialed Trainer who can certify Level I structured literacy specialist and Dyslexia Practitioners. This would ensure sustainability in the district and allow us to continue to train and certify teachers within the district. It would also help us maintain rigor and practice through ongoing training and refresher courses for all Level I certified staff.

I am pleased to say that with this layer of support over the past two years Lexington Local Schools has trained and certified 10 Level I staff members and will add three more certified staff members by the end of this year. Therefore, Lexington Local Schools will have 14 certified structured Literacy Specialist which includes an in district credentialed trainer, Dyslexia Therapist, and Foundations Facilitator.

Over the past 7 years this has been a powerful journey for Lexington Local Schools. Through this journey the focus has been on quality curriculum and evidence based instruction but we are constantly reminded that if we do not have strong professional development and supports we will continue to get mediocre results and quality will continue to be lacking in our curriculum. Therefore, we will continue this journey with the focus on teacher professional development and the need for all staff members to be trained in the area of structured literacy so all students can become readers.