

GOLDEN APPLE AWARD

CELEBRATING THE SUCCESS OF OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS

ARAPAHOE SCHOOL ARAPAHOE, WYOMING

Arapahoe School is a K-8, public school located on the Wind River Reservation in rural Wyoming. 98% of the students at Arapahoe School are Native American. Arapahoe is a school-wide, Title 1 school, with 95% of the student body qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Chronic absenteeism, low vocabulary skills, limited background knowledge, and the lack of literacy in the home are characteristics that describe the majority of the students. Prior to the advent of Direct Instruction (DI) and the arrival of Educational Resources, Inc. (ERI) at Arapahoe School, less than 10% of 3rd grade students met the 2007 “Spring Benchmark” on DIBELS. The view from the upper grades was largely the same.

Determined to change this prevalent pattern of education for Native American children, the staff of Arapahoe School adopted a select group of Direct Instruction programs in the Spring of 2007. Additionally, they chose Educational Resources, Inc. — a highly experienced consulting group that provides professional development and hands-on training, coaching, and assistance to schools implementing DI programs — to guide Arapahoe School’s implementation of Language for Learning, Reading Mastery, and Corrective Reading (all published by SRA/McGraw-Hill, Inc.); Reading Connections (published by Educational Resources, Inc.); plus Series Launchers & Reading for Success (published by Novel Ideas, Inc.). Having wisely chosen research-based curricula, the leadership of Arapahoe School then directed significant resources toward an effective, efficient, high-fidelity implementation of these programs. With the advice and assistance of ERI, initial and ongoing staff development and support became a high priority, to the point where instructional staff (both teachers and para-professionals) participated in side-by-side, in-class coaching 4 to 5 times per month!

Dramatic first year results (2007-2008 school year) prompted Arapahoe School to extend Direct Instruction programs through the eighth grade.

Currently, all students at Arapahoe School participate in Direct Instruction reading lessons. In addition, content area teachers incorporate direct instruction techniques into their lessons. The school board and administration increased the level of support for the staff and students during the second year (2008-2009) by offering additional professional development opportunities. This required teachers and paraprofessionals to return to school one month earlier than usual. The school board provided funds to extend contracts for the instructional staff. The instructional staff arrived early with optimism and enthusiasm about the upcoming year.

By the Spring of 2009, given only 2 years of DI and ERI, 60% of Arapahoe’s kindergarteners, 72% of 1st graders, 63% of 2nd graders, and 56% of 3rd graders met the 2009 “Spring Benchmark” on DIBELS.

Given the Spring 2007 DIBELS scores as a baseline, the Spring 2009 results yield an increase in reading achievement of 286% in Kindergarten, 277% in 1st grade, 150% in 2nd grade, and a whopping 622% in 3rd grade.

The students and staff of Arapahoe School deserve high praise. They have achieved outstanding gains in reading achievement in a remarkably short period of time due to their “no excuses” vision of student achievement, and their “we need to teach harder, better, and faster” approach to curriculum, instruction, and staff development. Clearly, these are the signposts on the road to educational excellence!

