



Students scoring advanced or proficient in reading increases 7 percentage points

Mt. Ephraim School District Profile

City/State:
Mt. Ephraim, New Jersey

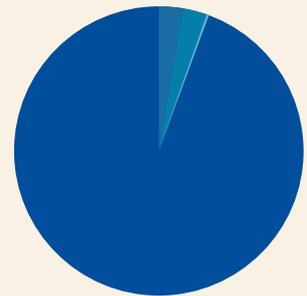
School Type:
Public

District Enrollment:
435 Students

Number of Sites:
2

Grades:
PreK-8

Ethnicity: ■ 90% Caucasian
■ 5% African American
■ 4% Hispanic
■ 1% Asian



» Overview

Mt. Ephraim School District, a small district located in Camden County, New Jersey just across the Delaware river from Philadelphia, hired Leslie Koller to be the new superintendent in January 2013. Koller was charged with addressing declining rigor in classrooms, low teacher morale, and new state requirements. And because the Common Core assessments were scheduled for 2014-2015, she had a year to turn the district around.

» Challenge

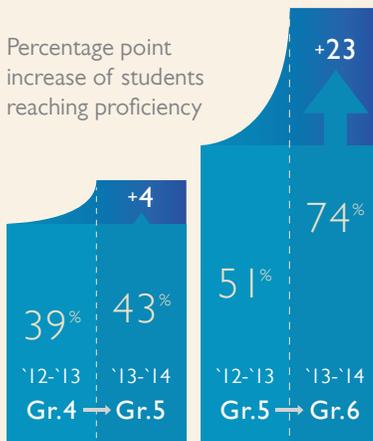
When Leslie Koller stepped into the role of superintendent, she immediately faced many challenges. For three years, teachers had not received new contracts or professional development. Student achievement was falling due to lack of rigor in the curriculum. The Common Core Standards were to have rolled-out over three years beginning in 2011-12 with final implementation completed by the end of school year 2013-14. By September 2013, the district should have been 2/3 of the way through implementation, but the process had never been started. First and foremost Koller wanted to elevate student outcomes and secondly, she had to implement the new standards in one year.

Mt. Ephraim School District CASE STUDY »

“When learning to read words with short vowel sounds our previous language arts series focused on blending word families. At first I was concerned that Reading Street required students to blend words with varied ending sounds right away and not just word families. Following the program my students met the challenge and had a very successful year.”

– Judy Czernski
Kindergarten teacher

FIGURE 1:
New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge Student Gains for Years 2012-13 and 2013-14



» Solution

“When the 2013-14 school year started, I launched a communication plan to parents, teachers, and students,” said Koller. “Parents were used to many of their children making honor roll. I told them that we were purchasing new curricula that were correlated to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The first year we were purchasing a new language arts program and the following year we would purchase new math curriculum. I warned them that the new language arts program, Pearson’s Reading Street, was very rigorous and that students would be facing more challenges this year.”

Koller gave her Kindergarten through 6th grade teachers everything they needed to implement the program with fidelity. Teachers received professional development throughout the year, both in-person and online. Koller encouraged them to stick with it for the entire year, and by the middle of the school year teachers saw the value in it. “This curriculum promotes foundational thinking skills for true research and logical reasoning,” explained Susan Mosebrook, 5th and 6th grades language arts teacher.

» Results

Worried about learning gaps due to implementing CCSS in one year instead of three, Koller was surprised to find that student outcomes did not suffer. “We have the greatest gains that we have had since 2008-09, which is the earliest date I have on record. We have made up some of the losses and then some,” said Koller. Based on state-level test scores, in one year, 3rd-6th grade students reaching proficient or advanced increased 7 percentage points, 5th grade alone increased 4 percentage points, and 6th grade increased 23 percentage points (see Figure 1).

“As tough as the year was, the curriculum became the one positive as teachers were able to see it working and students rising to the challenge. I think it reinforced their own faith in the kids and in their ability to teach at a higher level,” said Koller. Student growth was seen at every grade level. “Before Reading Street and Common Core, we celebrated the two or three students who exited Kindergarten as readers. Now, we are celebrating an entire class of readers,” said Terri Bergin, Kindergarten teacher.

To learn more about Common Core literacy solutions, visit

pearsonschool.com/Literacy

or contact your local Pearson representative.