INCREASING ACHIEVEMENT AND GROWTH GRANT
NORTHWEST COLORADO BOCES
Year 2 Annual Progress Report: September 30, 2014

The 15 elementary schools who are participating in this grant through NW BOCES continue to be grateful for the opportunity to refine and improve instruction for students with disabilities. This work has led us down a path that we did not necessarily anticipate at the outset of this work, and the momentum continues to build. Specifically, teachers and administrator in all buildings demonstrate an increased understanding of the nature of learning disabilities and the type of instruction that best supports students which these disabilities (i.e., the importance of explicit, systematic, multisensory, code-based instruction). Our work surrounds continuing to improve: 1) the quality of data analysis at all levels within a school, 2) the quality of instruction that teachers are able to provide, and 3) the quality and efficiency of systems of support for students with disabilities. Through analysis of our data and research on effective reading instruction, we have continued to refine our approach to these two targets, and remain confident that these targets combined are the correct course of action for improvement in student outcomes. The goals below and the accompanying narratives reflect the progress we have made in these areas and our next steps.

Goal 1: Increase regional collaboration to support students with disabilities

The opportunity to participate in a professional learning community and share resources, ideas, successes, and struggles is critical for any teacher. Within the NW BOCES, small schools and districts often do not have a large team to problem-solve and brainstorm for innovative solutions. Bringing together a team of "literacy leads" (lead teachers in each school) has created new opportunity for these expert teachers to learn from one another and bring innovative solutions and ideas to their school sites. We have continued to increase regional collaboration through the regional literacy committee and regional training opportunities for teachers. Additionally, through common training (specifically in OG and phonology) teachers and leadership across schools have developed common language for discussing instructional strategies. This has given teachers others who they can call on when they need support in their instruction.

We anticipate continuing these connections through the regional literacy committee and shared training opportunities. Additionally, we would like to try again to give opportunities for special education teachers to visit schools in the region to help them continue to develop their practice and form connections with job-alike peers.

Goal 2: Provide coordination and coaching to support improved literacy instruction for students with disabilities

The work of the literacy grant coordinator has continued to support schools in implementing systems that assure the success of all students. The literacy coordinator has continued to support schools and has been successful in helping to shift the thinking in most schools. Specifically, she has worked to help school leadership understand how to use data to drive both core instruction and intervention and has emphasized the importance of looking at assessment data by dissecting the data to represent specific skills for instructional focus rather than just an overall level. Additionally, the grant

coordinator has continued the work of strategically planning professional development opportunities by investigating current research and aligning this with the needs in our schools. The grant coordinator also provides individualized support to literacy leads to help them meet locally determined needs.

The grant coordinator's end of year evaluation (completed by Literacy Leads and principals) indicates that the grant coordinator has been highly effective in meeting grant goals. A summary of results from the grant coordinator's spring 2014 evaluation are included in Appendix A.

Goal 3: Provide professional development to support high-quality literacy instruction for students with disabilities

Our primary goal is for students with disabilities spend 100% of their time with teachers who are highly trained to meet their needs. Therefore, the bulk of the work under this grant has been the daunting task of getting all teachers and administrators up to speed on what literacy instruction needs to look like for students who do not readily learn to read. We have provided a total of 6,265 hours of professional development in the first two years of this grant. The importance of training for teachers cannot be understated.

This work is challenging and seemingly endless. Every school has teachers (some schools have more than others) who have a philosophical belief that differs from current research on instruction for students with learning disabilities. Many other teachers are not limited by philosophical beliefs about teaching reading, but do lack the specific skills necessary to provide explicit, systematic, multisensory, code-based instruction. Because of these two separate challenges, we have focused our professional development on both the theory and practice of teaching students with disabilities.

Given the daunting task of having all teachers highly trained in best practices for students with disabilities, we have been relatively successful. There is strong momentum behind shifts in practice and there have been significant changes in conversation throughout the majority of our schools. Professional development has focused on the early literacy needs of students with disabilities. However, it has had a strong effect on all literacy instruction in both elementary and secondary schools because teachers are shifting their thinking and are able to see how the best practices for students with disabilities can support the vast majority of students with and without disabilities.

We have continually narrowed our focus for the content of professional development and have found this to be very successful. By focusing our efforts on very specific instructional strategies, we have been able to vastly increase the number of teachers who have the same training and background. This allows for the systems-wide implementation that we believe is necessary for students with disabilities to be successful. Classroom teachers and interventionists are starting to have the same training and can talk about students' needs using similar language. This has had a strong positive effect on students in our schools.

As mentioned above, we have used the research of many well-respected within the community of research on reading disabilities and have focused professional development on explicit, systematic, multi-sensory, code-based language instruction including both theory and instructional methods. The details of this professional development are included in Appendix A to this report.

This coming school year, we will be piloting a new approach to teacher professional development. We have 2-4 teachers from each elementary school (29 teacher total, including at least one special education teacher per school) participating in a 75-hour year-long graduate level course entitled, "Building Excellence in Language, Literacy, and Leadership" (BEL3) for which they can earn credit through NW BOCES and Mesa State University. This course is utilizing a blended learning model. The teachers meet 3 times throughout the year for all-day in-depth sessions. Between meetings, they read, engage in online discussion, and conduct a "leadership project" within their school in which they put their learning into action. As a part of this course, participants will read Louisa Moats's *Speech to Print*, Linda Siegel's *Understanding Dyslexia and Other Learning Disabilities*, and a handful of relevant articles from the field of reading research. This project is just beginning, but it is already proving to be highly successful in ensuring that there is a highly trained literacy leader in each school. We will be excited to report some results from this approach at the next update.

Goal 4: Support schools with developing systems for ongoing fidelity of implementation, professional learning, and local collaboration

Literacy leads are provided stipends through the grant to monitor fidelity of implementation and lead professional learning and collaboration around effective literacy instruction for students with disabilities. Literacy leads are doing this work in a variety of ways including: coaching teachers on-on-one, leading professional development/training with staff, providing classroom coverage to facilitate observations, leading/coordinating PLC and data meetings, and working with administration to plan and implement systems of support. This work has been impressive and robust. The Literacy Leads have taken on the task of being sure that everyone within their buildings is able to provide high-quality, targeted instruction for students with disabilities. They have been able to support cultural shifts to increased collaboration and accountability. They have also been able to act as a resource for teachers who are struggling to know what to do with individual students. The skills and work of these teacher leaders will be a critical piece of creating sustainability after the grant period is over.

End of year reports from literacy leads in spring 2014 indicate that, as a result of their work, they are seeing growth in data analysis and collaboration between gen ed teachers, sped teachers, and special service providers to support improved outcomes for students with disabilities. All have a goal of providing increased levels of support through coaching and mentoring this year.

Goal 5: Increase school readiness and at-home literacy for students with disabilities

Motheread sessions for the parents of children with disabilities were completed in 6 of 7 districts this spring. Feedback from these sessions indicates that parents were able to take away new strategies for reading and developing oral language with their children. They also were able to find support in making connections with other parents whose children are struggling. In our work with Colorado Humanities to implement Motheread, we have learned that this is one of the most successful implementations of the Motheread program in the state. We are excited to continue to provide this resource to support students' continued development and learning at home. All schools are planning to implement again this school year; many have expanded their offering of this program through other funding sources.

Goal 6: Increase teachers' skills in technology integration to support access to core curriculum and intervention for students with disabilities

All of our elementary schools are participating in the CDE's ELAT project this year. Through this project, they are benchmarking and progress monitoring all students using Amplify Insight's platform for DIBELS Next. Use of Amplify's platform was a strategy that was originally written into the strategy for the Increasing Achievement and Growth grant. However, the ELAT project has allowed schools to utilize this powerful tool for all students, not just those in Special Education. This project has been intimately connected with the Increasing Achievement and Growth grant because the two projects share similar goals of increasing data use in schools.

As a result of the ELAT project and the work of the grant coordinator and literacy leads to support it, all schools have reported an increase in consistency around the use of data to drive instruction. Schools are identifying specific student needs for reading instruction and are progress monitoring students in these identified areas. Schools have reported an increase in progress monitoring, increase in discussions specific to data, and an increased ability to target interventions to the specific needs of students. Overall, the NW BOCES schools showed well-above average growth on DIBELS K-3 compared to Amplify Insight's national sample. Additionally, 8 of 13 elementary schools (2 schools are too small for meaningful data analysis) had well-above average growth and 2 showed above average growth. No schools had growth that was below the national average.

Additionally, 34 teachers attended training this summer on the use of iPads to support both intervention and differentiation in literacy instruction for students with disabilities. This training sparked some new ideas about how to use this technology to support students. However, these strategies have not had wide implementation in schools.

Impressions from the Field

In an effort to demonstrate the effect the work of the Increasing Achievement and Growth grant has had on our schools, we have compiled a collection of quotes from teachers and administrators that represent the impact our work has had on schools in the past year:

"The school-wide implementation of OG has brought our level of intervention instruction to a new level. We know with the proper progress monitoring and the use of good intervention tools, we have seen/will see growth with our targeted kiddos!"

"Words cannot explain the impact the literacy lead has had for our students and dialogue around early literacy. Without this role, we would not have made the growth that was seen last year. It also has brought a new level of professionalism and accountability to our teachers."

"Training of staff in Orton Gillingham has significantly changed the ways in which we are teaching reading acquisition across the building. Staff who were previously resistant to additional training in reading strategies are now urging us to bring back more training to complete training with all staff as they are seeing glimpses of how this can enhance student learning and acquisition of skills."

"Our students are getting higher quality interventions, more targeted to their needs. Furthermore, core instruction continues to improve in the areas of phonemic awareness and phonics."

"The trainings have placed literacy on the front burner in our school. Teachers have developed an understanding of how the brain learns to read. The discourse that occurs within the school is knowledgeable and thoughtful, connection instruction to research. Each classroom now spends literacy time providing direct instruction on the 5 components of reading. This includes upper grades (6-8)."

"The professional development has greatly enhanced the professional conversations of teachers at our school. Teachers are diving into deep discussions around literacy that previously were not possible because we didn't have common understanding. Students are receiving prescriptive targeted intervention, from highly qualified staff. We are having data focused conversations around student learning, allowing for students to receive the targeted interventions that they need to grow."

Summary

The NW BOCES has made great strides toward improving outcomes in literacy for students with disabilities. The most significant changes thus far have been in the culture of schools around data use and instructional practices. The vast majority of teachers and administrators have made shifts away from level-based to skill-based instructional groupings, from sporadic teaching of language skills to explicit, systematic, code-based instruction in phonics and morphology, and from data collection for compliance to meaningful dialogues around data to support improved instruction for students. We know that the move from theory to practice is one of the most challenging components in any large-scale improvement. We are hopeful that the common trainings, use of data, and thoughtful conversations that have started in all of our schools will continue to influence teachers' thinking and, in turn, students' learning.
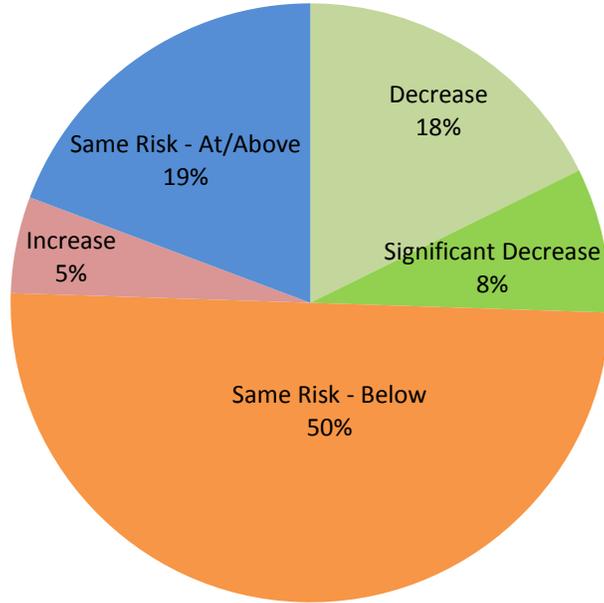
Data Analysis

Primary Disability	Benchmark			Strategic Intervention			Intensive Intervention		
	BOY 2013	EOY 2014	BOY 2014	BOY 2013	EOY 2014	BOY 2014	BOY 2013	EOY 2014	BOY 2014
01 I.D. or S.L.I.C.									
03 S.E.D. or Emotional									
04 S.L.D.	4 8.5%	6 12.5%	7 15.9%	5 10.6%	4 8.3%	3 6.8%	38 80.9%	36 75.0%	34 77.3%
05 H.I. incl. Deafness or H.D.									
06 V.I. incl. Blindness or V.D.									
07 Physical									
08 Speech/Language	21 27.3%	38 48.1%	25 35.2%	18 23.4%	12 15.2%	8 11.3%	38 49.4%	24 30.4%	38 53.5%
10 Multiple									
11 D.D. or Preschooler									
13 A.S.D. or Autism									
16 Other Health Impairment									
Grand Total	46 22.7%	76 36.0%	55 30.9%	33 16.3%	24 11.4%	18 10.1%	124 61.1%	92 43.6%	105 58.9%

***Data for some groups has been removed to protect confidentiality. All groups are included in the grand total*
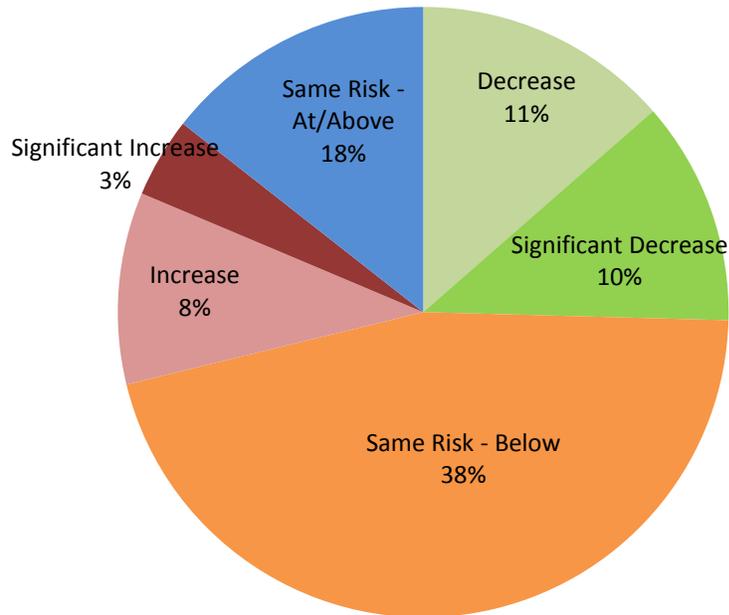
The chart above shows that in K-3 across all disability categories, the number of students scoring at benchmark or above increased by 8.2% from BOY last year (2013) to BOY this year (2014). The number of students with disabilities scoring in the intensive range on DIBELS decreased by 2.2% during this same period. More significant gains were made from BOY to EOY last year, but these gains do appear to have been retained completely over the summer. We believe that, while less dramatic, a comparison of BOY to BOY better illustrates the lasting effects of systems-wide improvement than a BOY to EOY comparison.

Cohort Group Analysis

DIBELS Risk BOY-EOY

Pie chart showing:
- Decrease 18%
- Significant Decrease 8%
- Same Risk - Below 50%
- Increase 5%
- Same Risk - At/Above 19%

DIBELS Risk BOY-BOY

Pie chart showing:
- Decrease 11%
- Significant Decrease 10%
- Same Risk - Below 38%
- Increase 8%
- Significant Increase 3%
- Same Risk - At/Above 18%

The chart above shows the percentage of students in our cohort group whose category of risk (red, yellow, green) changed from BOY to EOY and BOY to BOY. A significant increase/decrease is defined as a two-category change (i.e., moving from intensive to benchmark or benchmark to intensive). Students who were in 3rd grade during the 13-14 school year are not included in the BOY 14 analysis because they are no longer tested on DIBELS within our school systems. They are reflected in the TCAP data summarized below.
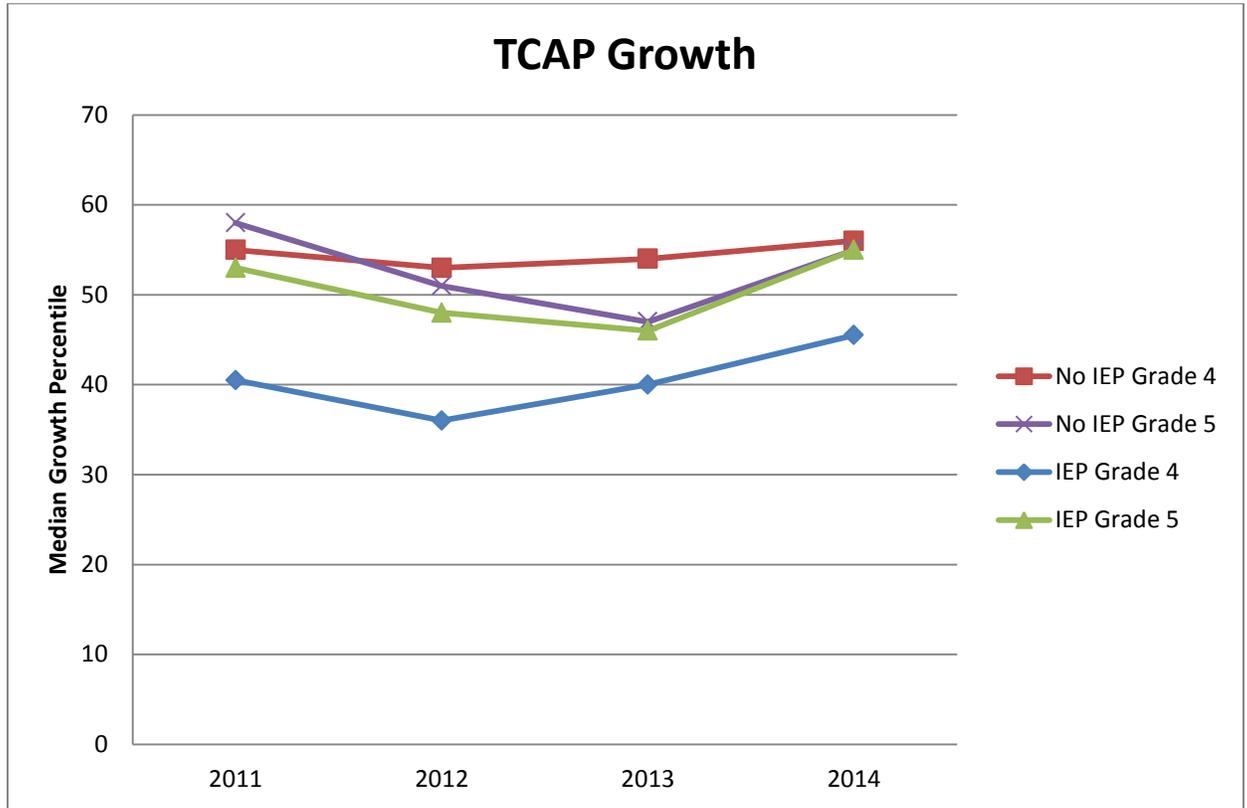
- Students in green on the charts (26% at both EOY and BOY) showed a decrease in risk – they moved up a category (red to green, red to yellow, or yellow to green). Those in dark green (8% at EOY and 12% at BOY) moved from the intensive range to benchmark or above from BOY 13 to BOY 14. This shows a positive response to instruction and interventions that they are receiving.
- Students in blue (19% at EOY and 22% at BOY) were at benchmark in the periods measured.
- Students in orange above (50% at EOY and 46% at BOY) were below benchmark (either yellow or red) at the beginning of the year and did not move up by the next reporting period. Some in this group are making slow steady progress, but their progress is not enough to catch them up. This is the group on which our problem solving efforts are focused.
- Students shown in red above (5% at EOY and 14% at BOY) increased in their level of risk.

Longitudinal Summative Data
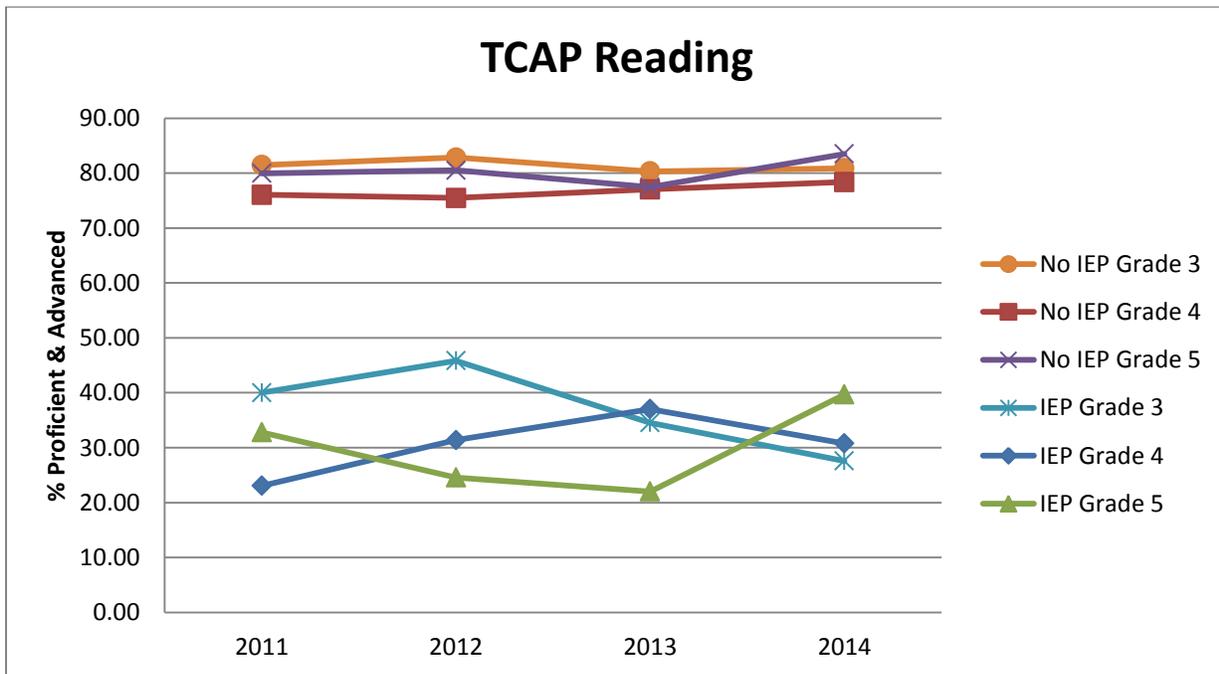
The data above does not show any significant improvement in outcomes for 3rd graders from the first year of grant implementation. Because we are focused on improving basic early literacy skills for struggling readers with disabilities, it is no surprise that we have not yet seen the results of our work in a high-stakes summative test such as TCAP. This test incorporates many different high-level skills in addition to basic literacy skills. We would anticipate that the younger students in our cohort group

(those in K-1 at the beginning of the grant implementation period) would be the first to see gains as on high-stakes summative assessments as a result of our work.

TCAP Growth

Median Growth Percentile

Legend:
- No IEP Grade 4
- No IEP Grade 5
- IEP Grade 4
- IEP Grade 5

TCAP growth data shows a slightly different story for many of our students. Although this data does not encompass our targeted group of K-3 students, schools have made significant systems-wide shifts in the way they are looking at data and providing instruction for all students. Additionally, there are many other forces at work in our schools outside of the Increasing Achievement and Growth grant. We believe that anything that is moving us forward is a positive step for students with disabilities. This data looks promising for our students with disabilities as strong growth is critical for catching up. Clearly, with only 1-2 years of data reflecting an upward trend, we are cautiously optimistic about the interpretation of this data. We hope that our work will replicate create an upward trend that continues in the future.

Appendix A: Grant Coordinator Evaluation

Spring 2014

Please rate the effectiveness of the literacy grant coordinator in each of the following job duties: (5-point scale)		
Support district personnel (including sped and gen ed teachers, literacy specialists, principals, and superintendents) in grant implementation	Very effective	86%
	Effective	14%
Coordinate and lead Regional Literacy Committee meetings	Very effective	100%
Coordinate appropriate literacy PD for K-3 sped and gen ed teachers	Very effective	100%
Coordinate Motheread PD and implementation	Very effective	71%
	Effective	29%
Provide guidance to K-12 sped teachers on literacy for students with disabilities	Very effective	57%
	Effective	43%
Communicate consistently with RLC, CDE, and BOCES staff regarding grant	Very effective	100%
Support member districts for grant duration including building sustainability for implemented changes	Very effective	86%
	Effective	14%

Please rate the effectiveness of the grant coordinator in each of the following grant goal areas: (1-5 scale, with 5 indicating "very much")		
Increased the capacity of my school to provide improved literacy instruction for students with disabilities	5	71%
	4	29%
Increased regional collaboration	5	86%
	4	14%
Increased local collaboration (school/district level)	5	71%
	4	29%
Increased my capacity to be a leader in my building	5	71%
	4	29%
Increased my school's understanding of how to use technology to support students with disabilities	5	57%
	4	29%
	3	14%
Increased my school's capacity to support parents in home literacy for students with disabilities	5	43%
	4	57%

Appendix B: Professional Development

Content	Rationale	Provider	Teachers	Hours	Perceived Impact
Training and materials for teachers on an OG-based program for phonics	Orton-Gillingham provides systematic, explicit, multisensory teaching of phonics and has shown historical success for students with disabilities	Orton-Gillingham International, Ron Yoshimoto	61	40	Very high - this training made a strong impact on both the type of instruction and the culture in schools
Training and materials for teachers on an OG-based program for morphology	Orton-Gillingham provides systematic, explicit, multisensory teaching of language and has shown historical success for students with disabilities	Orton-Gillingham International, Ron Yoshimoto	25	7.5	Very high - this introduction to explicit, systematic, multisensory morphology instruction has increased the interest and commitment to morphology in most schools
Training and materials for teachers on an OG-based program for phonics	Orton-Gillingham provides systematic, explicit, multisensory teaching of phonics and has shown historical success for students with disabilities	Institute for Multisensory Education	21	30	Moderate - following this training, teachers implemented OG on an individual basis. This training did not drive a lot of systemic changes.
Training for teachers on a program for training visualization of reading content to increase comprehension	Lindamood-Bell takes a unique approach to instructing students who struggle with comprehending what they read and has shown success in remediating these students	Lindamood-Bell, Visualizing/ Verbalizing	28	15	Low - most teachers are not using this method. They often state that very few kids need this type of support. Materials were not provided as a part of training.

Training for teachers on the use of iPads to support literacy intervention in the classroom	iPads are a promising tool to support students with disabilities. Teachers will be more effective in utilizing this tool when they are trained in effective strategies for use	21st Century Classrooms	34	7.5	Low - teachers are interested in using technology to support students, but are using it in more general ways, rather than in highly-targeted ways to affect student outcomes.
Training for teachers on preparing lesson plans that incorporate all aspects of literacy instruction including phonology and oral language	The vast majority of reading disabilities lie in the phonological processor. Teachers must understand the importance of and have the skills for inclusion of phonologically-based instruction to support students with disabilities.	Ascent Educational Consulting, Danielle Thompson	39	15	Very high - most schools have increased momentum and planning around using phonology in core instruction to support all students, especially those with disabilities.
Training for principals and school leaders on creating systems of support for students with disabilities	Students with disabilities need to be supported within a comprehensive system that impacts their entire day at school. School leaders are critical in the implementation of successful practices that improve outcomes for kids with disabilities.	Literacy Transformations, Melody Ilk	31	7.5	Varied - some school leaders have embraced the data-driven approaches that Melody provided. They have increased the level of accountability for all students achieving and have incorporated students with disabilities into their systems of support in a more effective way. The schools that have done this have seen great impact from this training. Others have not.

Information for teachers and school leaders on neuropsychology research on subtypes and remediation of reading and writing disabilities	An in-depth understanding of the neurological profiles of reading and writing disabilities helps teachers to identify, support, and understand students with disabilities.	Learning and the Brain, Steve Feifer	88	7.5	Moderate - because we were able to have such a large number of teachers and administrators in this training, we have an increase in the knowledge base of educators across the board, which has affected the conversations in all schools and districts. The transfer of this knowledge to instructional practices is more difficult to pinpoint.
Training for teachers on an intensive parent outreach program encouraging oral language development and reading at home	Oral language provides a foundation for reading and writing. Parents' involvement in the process of reading development must be meaningful, engaging, and appropriate to the role a parent plays in a child's life.	Colorado Humanities, Motheread	24	15	High - schools have reached out to the parents of students with disabilities and helped them to become a partner in their children's education. Motheread teachers have reported a strong community interest in the program and an increased level of engagement and understanding from participating parents.
Book study for teachers in Stanislas Dehaene's Reading in the Brain	Teachers need to have an accurate understanding of the complex neuropsychological processes occurring during reading and how they develop. This knowledge helps them with instructional planning and assessment for students who struggle to learn to read and reinforces the need for a literacy program that includes both decoding and language comprehension instruction.	NW BOCES, Beth Melton	33	15	Moderate - this book study created a lot of positive momentum for teacher leadership and engagement in the science of reading. All schools have shown an increased awareness of this science. Direct application to instruction is variable and based on the engagement and understanding of the individual teachers.

75 hour graduate-level course for teachers in learning disabilities, phonology, and orthography – designed to develop local expert leaders in literacy instruction	Schools need local support from an expert who can tailor support to meet the school's needs. We also will need ongoing support after grant funding ends.	Ascent Consulting, Danielle Thompson with NW BOCES, Beth Melton	29	75	In progress