

Greg Taranto, Ph.D.

Assistant to the Superintendent for K-6

Title IX Coordinator

Ken Crowley, M.S.

Assistant to the Superintendent for 7-12



CANON-McMILLAN
SCHOOL DISTRICT
— EST. 1954 —

Curriculum & Instruction

200 Big Mac Blvd.

Canonsburg, PA 15317

Phone: 724-746-2940

Fax: 724-746-9184

October 18, 2023

Dear Pennsylvania Senate Education Committee:

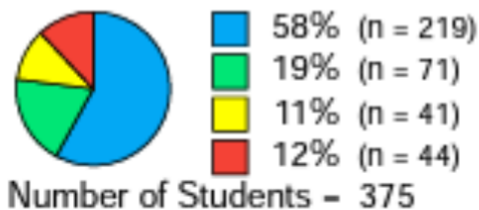
The purpose of this letter is to ask for you to support SB 801. As a school district that has fully embraced and transitioned to a true structured literacy approach, I can certainly speak to the profound impact it has had on our students.

Our students deserve evidenced-based instructional practices in order to maximize their learning potential. What does this look like in Canon-McMillan? A strong focus on learning to read in kindergarten through second grade by focusing on decoding and word recognition skills. This is followed by a shift to reading to learn in third grade that builds strong background knowledge, vocabulary and language on diverse subjects.

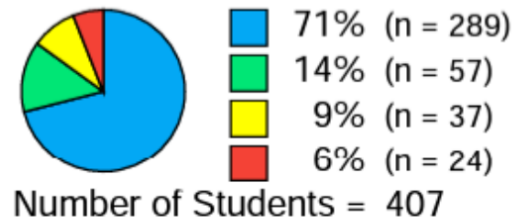
Screening is essential in this process because the earlier you catch a reading problem then the better chance of helping that child overcome that challenge. Screening takes place three times a year for all students kindergarten through fourth grade. We also continue the screening for students identified with reading difficulties for students through sixth grade. These screenings are quick and do not require a lot of time or resources. We utilize Acadience but Dibels also is another easy and effective way to accomplish this screening process.

At the conclusion of the 22-23 school year, our second graders were the first cohort to have received three complete years of structured literacy instruction. We saw tremendous growth in oral reading fluency accuracy among this cohort as compared to previous years despite having experienced the disruptions of the pandemic.

2021



2023



Status	Score Level	Likely Need For Support
	Above Benchmark	Likely to Need Core Support
	At Benchmark	Likely to Need Core Support
	Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Strategic Support
	Well Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Intensive Support

Our classroom teachers, reading specialists and principals will tell you firsthand what a profound difference moving to structured literacy instruction has made with their students. They knew balanced literacy was not working but did not know the reason. Through professional development and focusing on evidenced-based practices, they understood and embraced the change.

I cordially invite any of the Senate Education Committee members to visit Canon-McMillan to see our structured literacy in action. Please strongly consider SB 801 as the ability to read creates amazing opportunities for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Taranto", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Greg Taranto, Ph.D.

Assistant to the Superintendent

The Mission of the Canon-McMillan School District, in partnership with the community, is to invest in our greatest resource, our students. We strive to teach, challenge and support all students to prepare them for college and careers with the information and skills necessary to compete, achieve and serve as leaders in a global economy as ethical and responsible citizens.

We are an equal rights and opportunity school district.