

THE WAVE: HDES's Secret Weapon to Encourage Reading Success

The fall is in full swing and so is the WAVE at Hall-Dale Elementary School. The WAVE is a reading intervention program that was born from the struggles our staff identified five years ago with our students that could not receive reading support services, yet needed some extra support to continue to develop into a confident and proficient reader.

Mrs. Chamberlain, Diane Snell and the HDES staff got together to create a program that would involve all Kindergarten, first, and second grade students. This program was designed to provide these students the opportunity to read and develop their reading skills, at their level, in a small group, with a highly skilled educator. Research has proven that this is one of the most effective strategies to develop reading skills and abilities. The WAVE was offered only to these grades levels until last year, when it was decided that all students at HDES should benefit from the WAVE.

The beauty of this program is that the WAVE groups meet every day and they are fluid. Students are placed in a group based on their reading abilities. These groups are formed to meet the specific needs of each student. If a student meets the expectations set for the group then they are moved into another group, which will have new and more challenging expectations for them. While researching the WAVE for this article, one of the reading staff at HDES commented that she has had too new students move into her group recently and a few move out of her WAVE group this year too.

The focus of the instruction in WAVE groups is developing the vital skills for students to read fluently and to also acquire strong comprehension skills. Written expression is also part of this program. Although writing is minimal in the Kindergarten through 2nd grade WAVE groups, in the older groups writing skills are developed on a more regular basis.

Another wonderful piece of the WAVE program is the weekly updates that classroom teachers receive from the small group instructors, allowing the classroom teachers and small group instructors to collaboratively support the development of each student as needed. Weekly communication logs are also sent to the classroom teacher, documenting the progress and work done for the week by each student.

One of our formal school goals for the 2009-2010 school year is to have all students increase their reading ability from the beginning to the end of the year. Additionally we strive to have 80% of our students meet or exceed the end of the year reading proficiency expectations measured by the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment and the NWEA Testing that we complete both in the fall and the spring. We are also providing pullout literacy supports for all of our special education students, so they have additional opportunities to grow as readers too.

As always, our goal is to have 100% of our students meeting or exceeding the reading standards the state of Maine has set for our students. We feel it is a moral imperative to have all of our students become literate, so they can develop into active and free citizens of our great country. Reading is fundamental and the WAVE program at Hall-Dale Elementary School is meeting each student's individual needs with teaching strategies that are time-tested, research-based, and are appropriately challenging. It is making a difference for all our students in our school, because it meets students where they are. It honors their individuality, thus making it our secret weapon for reading success in our school.