Literacy Academy

This presentation contains examples and resource materials that are provided for the user's convenience. The inclusion of any material is not intended to reflect its importance, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services. These materials may contain the views and recommendations of the presenter as well as hypertext links, contact addresses and websites to information created and maintained by other public and private organizations. The opinions expressed in any of these materials do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. The U.S. Department of Education and Ohio Department of Education and Workforce do not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information included in these materials. Mentions of specific programs or products in these examples are designed to provide clearer understanding and are not meant as endorsements.

IEPs That Work: Aligning Goals to Students' Exact Literacy Needs

This session explores one district's journey from a compliance-focused approach to a student-centered, evidence-based literacy model.

READ Ohio Literacy Academy

Maura Brewster

Urban Literacy Specialist,
State Support Team Region 5

maura.l.brewster@sstr5.org

Andrea DiFrancesco

Education Program Specialist, Case Manager Youngstown City Schools
Office of Instructional Coherence and Impact,
Office of Exceptional Children

Andrea.DiFrancesco@education.ohio.gov

Objectives

1. Explain how the science of reading can inform IEP goal development for students with mild-to-moderate disabilities.

1. Examine logistical and structural solutions, such as specialized literacy labs, to support skill-based instruction.

1. Reflect on a district's journey from compliance to meaningful, growth-focused IEPs.

The Implementation Journey

Background

Timeline

2022-2023 Systems & Structures	2023-2024 Leadership Capacity	2024-2025 Teacher Capacity	2025-2026 Classroom Implementation
Focus: Establishing Special Education Internal Monitoring Teams.	**Focus:** Developing the Special Education Supervisors' knowledge of the SOR.	**Focus:** Aligning IEP goals to the SOR through ongoing professional learning.	**Focus:** Ensuring sixth-grade students with disabilities receive specially designed instruction in literacy aligned to their IEP goals.
Result: Teams determined that most literacy goals were not aligned to the Science of Reading (SOR).	**Result:** Supervisors determined that Intervention Specialists also needed additional support in writing and implementing IEP goals aligned to the SOR.	**Result:** Internal monitoring showed that 94% of 5th grade literacy IEP goals were aligned to the SOR, but limited structures existed to support these goals in 6th grade.	**Result:** Decision rules and aligned evidenced-based literacy interventions are established. 6th grade students with IEPs and Reading Improvement Plans are receiving Specially Designed Instruction aligned to the SOR.

How it started:

11 District Plan: Compliance & Monitoring

Objective 1: Language and Literacy

- Increase focus on language and literacy for **all students**
- Provide **extra support** for students with disabilities
- Strengthen understanding of the **foundations of reading**
- Ensure reading skills are taught effectively **across all grade levels**
- Help students become **proficient, confident readers**

Institute for Multi-Sensory Education (IMSE). "Students." Accessed via Amazon S3.
https://s3.amazonaws.com/imse-production-010821/images/students.jpg

Objective 1: District Responsibilities

District , School and Teacher Responsibilities

- Use MTSS tools for instruction
- Collect, analyze and identify literacy needs
- Use evidence-based strategies
- Conduct literacy walkthroughs
- Monitor and adjust supports based on data

Objective 1: Literacy Implications for YCSD

Positive Impacts on Instruction

- More consistent reading instruction across grades
- Earlier identification of literacy needs
    i. Decision Rules PK-12
- Stronger use of research-supported practices
    i. 1st Grade Pilot

System Improvements

- Better coaching & professional support
- Stronger collaboration and shared leadership
- More accurate MTSS-driven decisions

Internal Monitoring

- District created an Internal Monitoring Team to review IEPs and ETRs monthly.
- Data review—showed literacy goals in IEPs were not aligned to SoR or meeting student needs.
- Work was supported by the Urban Literacy Specialist to improve alignment and strengthen literacy goals.

Building the Capacity of the Student Services Team

- Launched a year long training with SPED Supervisors, Executive Director of Student Services and Director of Student Services
  - Over of the SOR, Structured Literacy, and Reader Profiles
  - Deep Dive into District Decision Rules
    - Universal Screening- Diagnostics- Instruction- Progress Monitoring
    - 2 example students
  - Writing IEPS
    - Connections to grade level standards
    - PLOP, Goal, Objective, SDI, Progress Monitoring
    - 3 example students with IEPs

Strengthening Systems Through Best Practice: Lit Lab

Literacy Academy

MS/HS Literacy Lab Instruction

- Full-time staff and dedicated instructional coach
- Data-driven student placement into Literacy Labs
- Targeted interventions based on decision rules
- Scheduled as an elective period (50 minutes)
- Content Mastery and General Outcome Progress Monitoring

2025 Literacy Academy Presentation

Literacy Academy

24-25 Literacy Lab Results

312 total students

- 80% total grew at least one year
- 47% grew 2 or more years
- 10% no growth

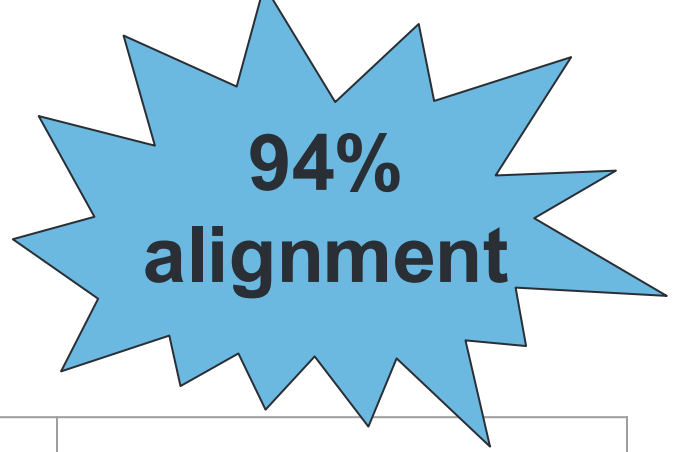
Aligning K-5 RIMPS and IEPs

Literacy Academy

24-25 Series for K-5 Intervention Specialists

- Writing IEPS
  - Connections to grade level standards
  - PLOP, Goal, Objective, SDI, Progress Monitoring
  - 3 example students with IEPs
- Resources Shared
  - SOR and Special Education
  - Implementing Interventions
  - RIMP and IEP Alignment Questions

Results:
Informal Sampling of Reading IEP Goals:
5th Grade Students with an IEP (59 students)



What SWD Diagnostic Data Indicated as a Need	Number of SWD with an ELA Goal	Number of Students with a RIMP	Number of Students that **did not** have an Aligned IEP Goal
Short Vowels, Blends, Digraphs	21	19	2
R-Controlled Vowels, Vowel Teams	13	12	0
Multisyllabic Words	25	19	2

SPED
lit lab
2.0
Lit lab

What we knew for the 25-26 SY

- RIMPs were moving up to 6th Grade
- Elementary IS took place in PD Aligning RIMPs to IEPs
  - Outcome: through internal monitoring, a majority of the K-5 IEPs seemed to be aligned to the SOR and student's RIMPs
- 90% of ALL students in Lit Lab were showing growth with a aligned intervention

Idea

If all MS and HS students were showing this much growth, What could this focused instruction look like for SWD?

- Problem
  - Too many students to place in Lit Lab
  - Ensuring IEP requirements are met
- Solution
  - Lit Lab 2.0

The Outcome: Lit Lab 2.0

Improving Literacy Outcomes Through Structured Intervention

Literacy Academy

Lit Lab 2.0 Scheduling

- Elective or intervention period for all students with a reading goal in their IEP
  - 40-50 minutes long
  - Scheduled into this class all year
  - SDI delivered during this period
    - EMS- 4 Intervention Specialists
    - CMS- 2 Intervention Specialists
  - Intervention Specialists were still able to push into core instruction during the students literacy block
  - Each building principal collaborated with SST, District Leadership, and Executive Director of Special Education to ensure accurate scheduling and plan for logistics

Lit Lab 2.0 Logistics

- Groups determined by Universal Screener and Diagnostic Data
  - This was based on end of the year results
- IEP Goal, SDI and RIMPs were examined to ensure that they aligned with the student's needs based on the data collected
  - IEPs amended as necessary
- Intervention Specialist trained in an Orton Gillingham program
  - 5 day initial training
  - 5 additional days of professional development and coaching sessions
- Students progress monitored weekly for content mastery data and biweekly on a general outcome measure

Lit Lab 2.0 Student Oral Reading Fluency Results

Building A	BOY	MOY	EOY	Difference
Average Accuracy %	71%	78%	81%	+10%
Average WCPM	44	50	59	+15

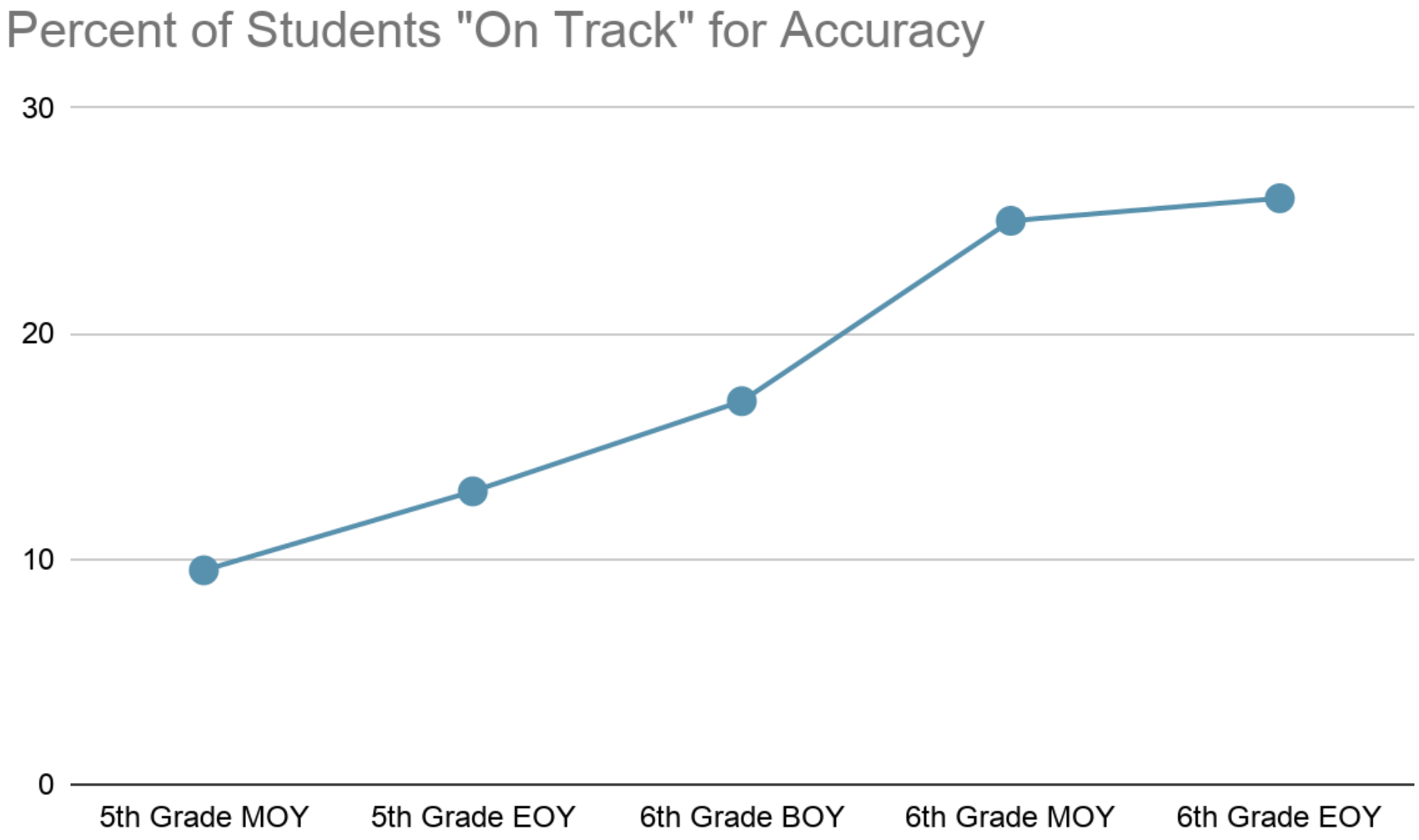
Building B	BOY	MOY	EOY	Difference
Average Accuracy %	71%	75%	82%	+11%
Average WCPM	53	55	49	-4

Lit Lab 2.0 Student NWEA Results

Building A	MOY	EOY
Average Growth	+7 points	+10
Growth Range	- 4 to +23 points	+3 to +22
Met MOY Goal	53%	
Met EOY Goal	42%	39%

Building B	MOY	EOY
Average Growth	+4 points	+16 points
Growth Range	-18 to +26 points	-4 to +26
Met MOY Goal	26%	
Met EOY Goal	26%	37%

Lit Lab 2.0 Student Results



Literacy Academy

Testimonials

It has transformed how I teach reading. I now have a clearer understanding of students' reading levels and how those skills transfer across all their classes. -Teacher

I like to be in Lit Lab 2.0 with Mrs. & Mrs. because it helps my reading and my spelling. It makes me feel smart because they teach me how to read, and it helps me in my other classes. -Student

Next Steps for 2026-2027 School Year Scheduling

- Going from 2 middle schools to 1
  - More Intervention Specialists to deliver instruction
  - Building Principal is invested in this work
- Expanding Lit Lab 2.0 to grades 6-8
  - Building Principal designed a master schedule to accommodate- staggered periods
  - Elective period only

Next Steps for 2026-2027 School Year Logistics

- Diagnostic data is being collected now, for ALL students
  - Spelling Inventory
- Reviewing 5th, 6th, and 7th grade IEPs
  - Examining alignment to identified needs and RIMPs
    - Amending as necessary
- Creating groups based on data

  This is all done by the end of the 25-26 school year
- Continued SST support
- Ongoing Professional Development and Coaching

QUESTIONS?

education.ohio.gov/LiteracyAcademy

READ Ohio Literacy Academy

Literacy Academy